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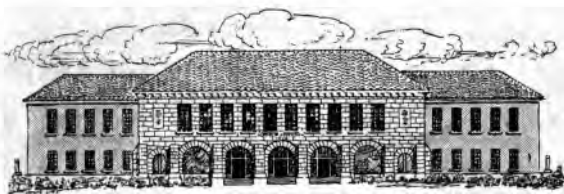
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# The Grading of Schools

BY

WILLIAM J. SHEARER.

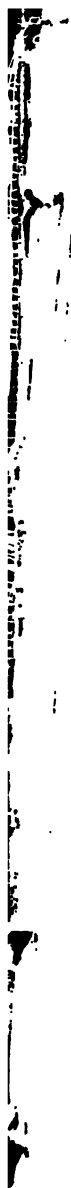


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# THE GRADING OF SCHOOLS

INCLUDING

A FULL EXPLANATION OF A RATIONAL PLAN OF  
GRADING,

BY

WILLIAM J. SHEARER, A. M.,

*Superintendent of Schools of the City of Elizabeth and County of Union  
N. J., and author of "The Lock-Step in the Public  
Schools," "Methods of Teaching Patriotism in  
Schools," "The Examination Grind," Etc.*

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SECOND EDITION

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1898

Wm. J. Shearer



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By WILLIAM J. SHEARER.

**FEB 3 1900**

**To the Boys and Girls of the Public  
Schools,**

**IN THE HOPE THAT  
IT WILL LEAD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
A PLAN OF GRADING WHICH WILL  
LEAVE EACH PUPIL FREE  
TO ADVANCE ACCORDING TO ABILITY,  
THIS BOOK IS  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.**



## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE.
Preface, . . . . .	7
I. The Ungraded School, . . . . .	11
II. The Evolution of the Graded School, . . . . .	17
III. The Typical Graded School, . . . . .	22
IV. Different Class Intervals, . . . . .	32
V. The Usual Method Condemned by Educa- tors, . . . . .	40
VI. Unsuccessful Attempts to Correct the Defective Grading, . . . . .	45
VII. Classification of Pupils, . . . . .	59
VIII. Reclassification of Pupils, . . . . .	66
IX. Promotion of Pupils, . . . . .	76
X. Apportionment of Work, . . . . .	91
XI. Method of Securing Thoroughness in Es- sentials, . . . . .	98
XII. Means of Enlisting the Interest of Par- ents and Pupils, . . . . .	110
XIII. Location and Removal of Danger Points in Each Grade, . . . . .	120
XIV. Number of Divisions and Basis of Classi- fication in Each Grade, . . . . .	131
XV. Programs for Each Grade, . . . . .	140
XVI. Means of Reaching the Individual and Helping the Future Teachers, . . . . .	153
XVII. Beneficial Results of a Rational Plan of Grading, . . . . .	162
XVIII. Testimony of Principals and Teachers, . . . . .	171
XIX. Editorial Endorsement, . . . . .	183
XX. How Any Graded School May Easily Adopt a Pliant Plan of Grading, . . . . .	203
XXI. The Grading of the Ungraded School, . . . . .	209



## PREFACE.

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For the first time in the history of education, the importance of securing a better plan of grading the schools of cities and towns occupies the prominent place in educational discussions to which it has long been entitled. At last it is realized that, of all the difficult problems which confront those who are responsible for the organization and administration of the schools, no other affects more vitally the present and future welfare of the boys and girls in the public schools. No other is of so much interest to parents solicitous for the advancement of their children. No other is of more importance to principals and teachers, who have been compelled to work under the mediaeval plan, which has long since outlived its usefulness. No other is such a source of worryment to wide-awake superintendents and members of boards of education, who realize the fact that the system of grading, which was in-

tended to faithfully serve the children, has become their tyrannical master.

Being the first book written upon this important phase of school organization, no apology is offered for its appearance. However, in making this contribution to educational literature, a few words of explanation will not be out of place.

When years ago I left the work in the rural schools and accepted a position in a system of graded schools, I was greatly impressed with the fact that, because of the usual plan of grading, there was serious injury done to many pupils. In the rural school, pupils possessing the ability and determination were free to move forward, without dragging others with them, and without being held back by those who either did not have the ability to move more rapidly over the work, or who lacked application. No such freedom existed in the graded school, where all were expected to move at the same rate for their whole school lives.

In the hope of finding a more flexible plan of grading, diligent search was made, though without discovering a plan which had been successful in breaking up Procrustean beds of grades. Impressed with the importance of having some more rational plan, the attempt was made to work out, in school, a method which would make it easy to

regulate the pupil's advancement solely upon his own ability and attainments, rather than upon the supposed ability of the mythical average pupil. A method was gradually evolved, which, without adding to the expense of the schools or to the strain upon the teacher, gave excellent results.

During the past ten years this plan has been discussed in educational associations and educational journals, and lately a brief explanation of the method was given in the "Atlantic Monthly." Instead of satisfying, this seemed only to have greatly increased the interest in the subject. The leading papers of the United States have given the plan the strongest editorial indorsement. Kind letters and searching inquiries have poured in from earnest superintendents, principals, teachers and members of boards of education, from every part of this country and Canada. These proved that I had been successful in my efforts to awaken interest in this important question, but had not succeeded in giving a clear idea of the plan which had given results much desired by all thoughtful educators. Therefore, in answer to several hundred requests, the promise was made that a fuller explanation would be given. Then, the intention was to simply expand the previous articles; but the necessity of answering quite fully the many excellent and pertinent ques-



tions required a much fuller discussion of principles and a far more lengthy explanation than was at first contemplated.

Written under great pressure, a page or two at a time, long after the day's work should have been laid aside, no effort has been made to attain literary excellence; so that upon this and other lines there is much to tax the patience of the indulgent reader. It is written as an aid to those who are devoting thought and study to this subject, and not as a substitute for either.

No matter what the reception of the book may be, it is earnestly hoped that it will prove of assistance to my earnest co-laborers who are trying to break away from unsatisfactory methods, that our excellent public schools, which are increasing in efficiency at an ever-increasing rate, may even more grandly fulfill their heaven-born mission.

WILLIAM J. SHEARER.

Elizabeth, N. J., Nov. 12, 1898.

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## Chapter I.

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### THE UNGRADED SCHOOL.

All the older schools seem to have been organized in about the same way and to have been ungraded. The ungraded school is, therefore, the germinal school from which all others have sprung. In fact, until well into the present century, all American schools were practically ungraded. For this and other reasons a consideration of the ungraded school cannot fail to be beneficial as a preparation for the study of the grading of schools.

#### Characteristics—

An authority\* gives the following as the principal peculiarities of the ungraded schools: "In the first part of this century—it almost seems like ancient history, now that the conditions everywhere are so different—the grading of elementary schools was a thing unknown in this country. Instruction was almost wholly individual. Whenever a pupil chose to present himself

\*J. C. Boykin.

for admission into school, no matter at what time of the year, he was received. His studies were determined by the books he brought. His first lesson was apt to follow the last one that his former teacher had given him. If he had been through Webster's 'Blue-back' Speller twice, and had finished the last column of the tenth page, on the third round, the first column on the eleventh page would naturally be the first lesson that his new teacher would give him. If a class already formed had reached just that point he was put into that class. Otherwise he would probably form a new class. It was thus by no means uncommon to see a dozen or more classes in the same room studying the same book, but at a dozen or more stages of advancement in it; and, altogether, a teacher with a school of moderate size, containing pupils of all ages, sexes, and sizes, might easily have fifty or sixty classes. Attend to them all? Certainly; but what attention! The little fellows received but little of it; especially those who had learned to read. Their lessons would be heard every few days. The teacher's pet classes were called to the recitation bench often; and his favorite subjects received nearly all his attention. The rest of the school whiled away the time as best they might. They 'did their sums' on their slates, or droned over their 'blue-backs,' until they were tired, and then

turned their attention to each other and to mischief, opportunities for which frequently appeared in the open mouth or bare soles of a sleeping pupil; and such opportunities rarely went unimproved."

We see, then, that instruction was almost entirely individual in every sense of the word. Each pupil's lessons were not only determined by the books he happened to have, but each one studied what he pleased, in the way he pleased, and as long as he pleased. The school was really modeled after the system of family education which existed in Europe in the fifteenth century.

#### Advantages—

In the early schools, the instruction given was generally directed to one pupil at a time; therefore it could always be suited to the individual. The teacher came into close contact with each pupil, and, without effort, the attention could be held to any difficulty presenting itself. As but a small part of the time was spent in recitation, all the lessons could be prepared in school. Once called to the class, the pupil could not escape. He could not rely upon learning the lesson by hearing others recite. As the lessons were learned with but little or no help from the teacher, "the system favored the formation of habits of self-reliance and independent effort, patience, perseverance and courageous attack of difficulties. The boy was

compelled to depend largely upon himself and to appeal to the teacher only in case of emergency. This was so far a valuable training, not only for school, but for after-life; it made boys manly; it accustomed them to the use of their own strength; and it fostered the growth of originality and decision of character, of thought, and of speech. There was an entire absence of that dead level of effort so common in schools now.”\*

May this not account for the fact that the ungraded school was a developer of genius, and had, for the few, at least, some important advantages? Certain it is, that from these schools have come many of the strongest characters, who have easily led all others in the battle for supremacy.

Disadvantages—

Under this plan there was no saving of the teacher's time and strength. Time and again the same old difficulties had to be met and removed for each pupil. The many mistakes common to all had to be corrected for each one separately. Interesting information had to be given as many times as there were scholars, or, as was too frequently the case, omitted altogether. The larger the school the more unsatisfactory was the work, the less efficient the instruction, the less time to be devoted to each pupil, and the harder

\*London.

the discipline. In many ways the pupils wasted their time. With reference to this Landon speaks as follows: "To prevent this a rigid system of harsh punishments was carried out. The insubordination 'was kept down by a very free and frequent use of the lash.' How severe the discipline was in some cases may be gathered from Jean Paul Richter's account of punishments given by a Suanian school-master. Small faults and breaches of minor rules—such as talking—not immoral in themselves, were magnified into little less than crimes, and the pupil's notions of right and wrong thereby confused. The discipline was merely the result of personal authority; little or no sympathy with right was aroused, or respect for law inculcated. The temporary absence of the master was generally the signal for a scene of riot and confusion. Speaking of the French schools, Willm says: 'There generally existed between the instructor and his pretended pupils the same relation and sympathy as among a gang of rebellious slaves and their overseer; with but few exceptions, both master and scholars sighed for the moment when the labor of each should end. On escaping from school, the greater part of the children, shaking off the dust of the blows and lessons they had received, rushed back in some measure to a state of nature and liberty.' In class teaching one secret of success is

to make the quick and intelligent boys a means of benefiting the rest; even their mistakes are often useful. Stimulated by their example and success, the dull ones put forth their best efforts, and frequently astonish even themselves. The individual plan forfeited all gain of this kind, and there was an entire absence of that spirit of class emulation which a good teacher knows how to make the most of. The system, in fact, favored those who were strong, quick, and industriously inclined, but depressed and disheartened the weak and slow. The dullness, weariness, and want of spirit and variety in the work were very marked; and, except while saying lessons, there was no change of posture or of place. To-day was but as yesterday, to-morrow like to-day; it was one dull, heavy round of routine."

## Chapter II.

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### EVOLUTION OF THE GRADED SCHOOL.

The first step toward the graded school was made possible when the number of pupils increased so that several could recite together in certain branches.

A second step still further simplified matters, by confining all to a definite course of study. This did away with much aimless teaching and study, saved a great amount of useless repetition and much time for both teacher and pupils. This method represents the best type of rural school at the present time. While it is a great advance over the primitive ungraded school, yet a lack of proper classification and of sufficient time to devote to the many classes prevents the progress which is desirable. An increase in the number of pupils makes possible a better classification; but the time which can be spent with each class is too short for the accomplishment of good work.

A third step toward a proper plan of grading was



taken when the number of pupils increased sufficiently to warrant the employment of two or more teachers. Then, for the first time, was possible a division of labor. The classification and grading of schools is but the application to education of the same law of division of labor that prevails in every successful business. It is not only the most economical way, but it is a prerequisite to satisfactory progress upon any line.

In the most primitive state of society, each does all. But long before man emerges from the savage state the division of labor receives some recognition, and, very early in the history of civilization, it is recognized as a necessary condition to human progress. As society advances, each takes up the work for which he is best fitted by endowment and education, and trades and professions result. As society grows more complex, each gives special attention to that part of his work for which he is best suited; and thus we have specialists in every occupation. We see, then, that as division of labor is an indispensable condition to success in material things, so division of labor in educational matters is but the result of necessary obedience to the universal law of progress. The teacher's time and talents being concentrated upon certain work, it becomes easier by repetition, and, therefore, is likely to be performed more efficiently.

A fourth step toward the graded school was taken when the number of pupils attending the schools of a district increased so as to justify the employment of eight or ten teachers. This desired end was often reached by the union of schools, where such union was feasible. The course of study was then divided into a series of ascending steps, each preparatory to the next higher. The teachers were assigned definite portions over which they were expected to take their pupils during the year. Under such conditions the pupils could be closely classified, and those about equal in ability and attainments could be instructed together. Only by doing this can we have a graded school system such as we now understand by that term. The greater the degree of differentiation the higher the type of organization. Herein lies the superiority of the graded school over the ungraded school, in which there can be no differentiation. At this point, also, is found the greatest weakness of the graded school, for in it the degree of differentiation is less than it should be and can easily be made. Therefore, the way to correct the defective grading is to grade more closely.

#### THE FIRST GRADED SCHOOL.

The first graded school was established in 1537, by John Sturm, at Strasburg. More than any

other, it has had a vital influence upon the schools from that time to the present. This school, which was organized as a gymnasium, was recognized as a college in 1567 and as a university in 1621. The pupils were expected to spend a year in each one of the nine classes, each class having its own teacher, its regular course of study, and its examination for promotion, about as in the graded schools of to-day which have not broken away from these mediaeval methods. Sturm not only apportioned a certain amount of work to be accomplished in a given time, as nearly all do now, but he even "forbade them to learn anything else." These ideas of his were transmitted from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth by means of the Jesuit schools and the secondary schools of Continental Europe.

#### THE FIRST AMERICAN GRADED SCHOOL.

About 1835 great interest was shown in the schools of this country. The need of some change in the plan of classification was everywhere apparent, but what the change should be none seemed willing to say. For a time, the only classification which seemed feasible was a rough grouping into three departments, each taught by a single teacher. Though this proved unsatisfactory, because pupils could not be properly classified, there were some who still advocated the placing of the pupils of an

ungraded school in three divisions, to be taught by one teacher. Later, union schools were formed by the consolidation of several schools. Experience with these showed their advantages, and, at the same time, proved that a division into only three groups was not sufficient to properly provide for the important differences in the ability of pupils to do the work assigned. It also made plain the fact that, as the number of pupils increased, the possibility of more accurate grading was greatly improved. In spite of this fact, it was not until 1847 that John Philbrick worked out the details of the first graded school in this country. Gradually others adopted the plan, and by 1860 the schools of most of the cities and large towns were graded. By 1870 the pendulum had swung from no system to nothing but system.

We see, then, that the American graded school was not transplanted from abroad, but that it is the result of a growth, which has continued for years in our own country; yet the graded school, as it is generally found, differs but little, in manner of grading and promoting, from the first graded school founded by Sturm three hundred and sixty-one years ago. Is it not to be wondered at, that for so long a time we have been satisfied with this mediæval plan of grading, while on other lines there has been so much progress?

## Chapter III.

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### THE TYPICAL GRADED SCHOOL.

#### Characteristics—

In the graded school the pupils are roughly classified according to their supposed ability to do the work of a given year; and each class is placed in charge of a teacher, who is expected to give the same lessons to all members. Each teacher has a separate room, and over the teachers of a building is generally placed a principal, who has the oversight of the schools in the building. When the number of schools increases sufficiently to warrant the step, a superintendent is placed over all the schools of the system. The course of study is divided arbitrarily into a number of parts, each supposed to contain enough work to keep the pupils busy for one year. The effort is made to have all accomplish the same work, in the same way, in the same time, and be ready for an examination, that

all may be promoted at the time fixed by the superintendent or by the Board of Education.

**Advantages—**

As has been pointed out, the graded school merely applies the law of the division of labor to education, and is, therefore, advantageous for many reasons. Far better than the ungraded school, it measures up to the important requirement of the greatest good to the greatest number, in the shortest time, at the least expense. It also gives the many and important advantages of the class recitation.

**Disadvantages—**

Though experience with pupils from private schools must convince all that the American graded school is equalled by no other, and although each year it is increasing in efficiency and power; yet it is useless to deny that this method of grading and promoting, which binds together the bright and the dull, is responsible for a number of serious defects, which the friends of the schools should clearly see, in order that they may quickly correct them.

**Usual Plan Not Flexible.** Though the graded school has many advantages, we should not close our eyes to the fact that it is open to the serious charge that it does not properly provide for the individual differences of the pupils; that it is not

sufficiently pliant to accommodate itself to the pupils, but demands that the pupils accommodate themselves to it; and that that grading, which was intended to serve the children, has now become their cruel master.

Teachers, Classes and Pupils Differ. All must admit that teachers vary greatly in knowledge, power, skill, and in other particulars affecting their efficiency. Every experienced teacher knows that classes differ in their ability to accomplish a given amount of work. No one dares deny that the children of every grade differ widely in age, in acquirements, in aptitude, in physical endurance, in power of attention, in home advantages, in the rate of mental development, in the time of entering school, in regularity of attendance, and in many other ways affecting their progress.

(Pupils Kept in Intellectual Lock-Step.) Because of the manner of grading and promoting, the graded school of to-day keeps all the children of each grade in intellectual lock-step, not only month after month, but year after year, for their whole school lives. Children are not alike, then, in ability or in any other way, and God never intended they should be made alike. Why then should we put them into "educational mills," and attempt to grind them out alike, crushing out that individuality which He meant should be a guide to their educa-

tion and usefulness, and not a hindrance thereto? Is there any reason why we should labor to produce uniformity of tastes, of character, of ability, of aspirations? Is not individuality of more importance than evenness of grading? Is it not the divinity of the child? Should it not be sought for and discovered, that it may be carefully studied and lovingly guarded? Does not biography teach us that only those have become distinguished who have developed a love for work along particular lines? Is it not time that we cease condemning the teachers because, in spite of all the mentioned differences, and many others unmentioned, but not undiscovered, they cannot produce symmetrical nonentities? Must the poor teachers, limited in power and by conditions, be criticized because they cannot overcome the differences in ability predetermined by the Almighty?

Method of Grading the Work Defective. That the marked differences in children, in classes, and in teachers, are not properly provided for, either in the amount and character of the work required, or in the time to be spent upon the work, is readily seen, when we consider the usual method of grading and promoting. The course of study for the graded school is divided arbitrarily into a number of grades, generally a year apart, and the work for



each grade is laid out for the bright, the slow, or the average.

Many schools grade the work for the bright. In this case, all the rest are dragged over far more work than they can understand. Therefore, many soon become discouraged and drop out of school.

Though not generally acknowledged, yet in reality the courses of study in most schools are graded for the slower pupils. This is certainly an outrage on the large majority of pupils who can and should go forward more rapidly. Not only is the progress of all kept down to the pace of these slower ones, but, worse than this, the majority of the pupils are drilled into habits of inattention and idleness. So long has this continued, that many teachers have come to believe that pupils do not differ materially in their ability to cover the course. However, there are thousands of earnest teachers who realize the great injury done the pupils by such a method of stifling talent.

But by far the largest number of schools are supposed to be graded for the "average pupil." At first sight this looks reasonable; but, could anything be more absurd? Surely it would be just as sensible to say, that, as the pupils in a certain grade vary in height from three feet six inches, to four feet four inches; and as they now average four feet, and by the end of the year should average four feet one

inch, those naturally tall must gradually be compressed, and those naturally short must go through a stretching process, so that all may come up to the desired average. What a grand system this would be for the physical development of the children! Surely such a method would have a still more blighting effect upon their mental development. The truth is, that, neglecting the ever present individual pupil of flesh and blood, of soul and life, and infinite possibility, the attempt has been made to reach all, by shaping the work for the mythical "average pupil."

As the course of study is nailed to the calendar, when the sign is right, and the sun has reached a certain altitude in the heavens, and the thermometer is "ninety-five in the shade," and the pupils' energy is nearest zero, all are subjected to a useless examination, which the lucky pass, while the rest lose a year, or leave school. Thus, year after year, in chain gangs, are the bright and the slow bound and forced to move at the same pace for their whole school lives.

**The Bright Pupils Ruined.** The effect of such methods on the bright children is most disastrous; for it injures them greatly, both mentally and morally, to hold them down to the pace of the slower ones. Who would work the mettlesome racer with the heavy draught horse and not expect

it to end the usefulness of the racer? What man of spirit could long bear to walk in step with a child, if he felt the need of arriving at his destination quickly?

The Slower Pupils Are Injured. Regardless of thoroughness, the dull are rushed over the work. They fall behind, stumble for a time at the foot of the class, then, misunderstood, unappreciated and discouraged, drop out of school, or are quietly obliged to leave lest "they bring down the examination average." What teacher has not seen such pupils drop out of school, having lost all interest in life? Sad it is that they have lost the confidence of their teachers. Sadder still that they should no longer be encouraged by the confidence of their parents. But infinitely more are such pupils to be pitied, because they have lost all confidence in their own abilities. Almost certain are they to become lost characters. Yet, the most of them could have been saved, if only they could have been permitted to go at the pace that the Almighty intended they should, instead of being obliged to go at the rate that some Board of Education had fixed. Why should any one wonder that the most of these leave school? Is it not time that an effort be made to suit the pace to them, instead of forcing them into an unnatural gait?

But Few Gain Time. Under the present system

even the brightest cannot gain time; while if any but the brightest lose time they fail to be promoted, and so lose a whole year, when in fact they are but a month or two behind with their work. Statistics show that less than one per cent of the pupils can successfully skip the work of a whole year. It is generally asserted that not more than twenty per cent of the pupils fail to be promoted, yet the statistics of certain cities show that not less than from thirty-five to fifty per cent of those remaining at the end of the year failed. Some claim that those who fail do better work the following year, but statistics show that the large majority of the pupils do not return to school, and but few of those who do return do good work.

**Pupils Lose Much Time.** Statistics from many cities prove that eighty per cent of the pupils lose from one to four years; and, for every one hundred pupils in the schools investigated, there had been from one hundred and twenty-five to three hundred and seventy years lost. These statistics were gathered in distant cities of different states. The following figures show the loss per one hundred pupils, in different schools: One hundred and twenty-five, one hundred and sixty-six, one hundred and seventy-five, two hundred, two hundred and twenty-five, two hundred and thirty-three, two hundred and thirty-seven, two hundred and fifty, three hun-

dred and forty-eight, three hundred and seventy-two years.

The above facts are conclusive proofs of the assertion that, under the usual plan, it is very easy to lose time and exceedingly hard to gain it.

The gain of time would not be worthy of consideration but for the fact that, as the work is graded for the slower pupils, there is not sufficient work to keep the rest interested and busy. It would be difficult to find a course of study which the brighter pupils could not easily finish in from one to three years less time than is allotted.

**Injury to the Pupils.** It is very injurious to place pupils with those of unequal ability; it is little less than criminal to compel them to walk in intellectual lock-step with such for months and years; it is an outrage to constantly goad children, to hurry forward the slow or to hold back the bright; and to force many out of school, after having destroyed their self-confidence and condemned them to lives of ignorance, if not worse, is barbarism such as should not be permitted in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

**A Demand for a Better System.** Is it any wonder that this ironclad system of grading—which, regardless of all differences, would cast all minds in the same mould, and subject all to the same treatment, for the same length of time, and test all

in the same way at the same time—is objected to, because it demands so much uniformity at every step that the majority are forced to leave school, while those who do graduate, finish too late to get a fair start in life? Is it any wonder, then, that from all sides there comes a demand for some system of grading which will be more pliant, and which will not attempt to overcome, not only the differences of physical ability and physical environments, but even the differences in mental capacity? Is it any wonder that on all sides thoughtful educators are studying this problem as never before, and are planning to strangle this demon of uniformity, which cuts short the school life of the majority, and menaces the intellectual life of every boy and girl in the graded schools?

## Chapter IV.

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### DIFFERENT CLASS INTERVALS.

As the class interval has a powerful influence in determining the method of grading, it is important that the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of the several class intervals should be clearly comprehended by all who are considering a change in the method of grading.

#### THE YEAR INTERVAL.

Formerly, with but few exceptions, all the schools had the year interval between classes, it having been thus arranged to correspond with that of the colleges.

#### Characteristics—

Under this plan the classes were a year apart. The course of study was divided into the same number of parts as there were years in the course, and each portion assigned to a given year. Each year the pupils took up the work apportioned for the

year for which they were supposed to be prepared, and spent the whole year on the work, though many could easily have finished the work in half the time. Change to a higher class came only at the end of the year, except in those instances where it was found that pupils had not been properly placed. In speaking of methods of promotion, Picard says: "One method of administration places the several grades, as it were, in a series of rooms adjoining, but separated by a wall in which is a closed door. Once a year this door is opened for the passage of those who are provided with cards bearing the requisite percentage marks, and then closed for another year. They are not lured upward and onward. They are goaded by the dread of continuance for another year in the room which has lost all of its attractions for them. Wise supervision has succeeded in opening the doors more frequently. Wiser supervision has rested less upon cards of admission bearing percentage marks, and more upon cards of merit obtained from watchful and loving teachers. Wisest supervision has removed the doors entirely, so that constantly a stream of influence flows downward, arousing a healthy ambition, inspiring self-activity and furnishing a worthy motive for advance; and, in response to this influence, there is a steady movement of pupils upward."



### Advantages—

It is only reasonable to presume that the year interval, which was almost universally used, had some manifest advantages other than that it was preferred by the colleges and most of those in charge of the schools. Yet, sad to relate, the only important advantage which has been claimed by the friends of the year interval is, that it is easily managed. That such is the case all will agree; for it practically runs itself. Only once each year is it necessary for superintendent and principal to give attention to classification and promotion of pupils, therefore it is certainly most convenient for those who must look after these important matters. Then, again, it is perhaps easier for the teacher, who, by holding all in one class, can get along with fewer recitations than if the pupils were divided into two or more classes, which is generally done in those schools having the shorter interval.

In reality, these are the only advantages which can properly be claimed as peculiar to the year interval. As these claims are purely selfish, they should not be considered; for the schools are for the children, and not for superintendent, principals and teachers. One advantage sometimes claimed for this plan is that under it pupils will not need to change teachers more than once each year. While it is generally admitted that, in some respects, it is

best for pupils to remain a year with each teacher, this same end may be reached under other methods, and is, therefore, not peculiar to this plan.

Disadvantages—

The greatest objection to the year interval is that, under this plan, it is almost impossible to re-classify pupils during the year, even though superintendent, principal and teachers realize its importance and endeavor to make it possible. Some assert that a few of the pupils are reclassified under the year interval; but these scholars are generally those who were not properly placed at the beginning of the year. If sufficient work is apportioned to each grade, pupils cannot skip the work of an entire year without great loss. Statistics prove that, under this plan, not one in a hundred pupils tries to do so; and the majority of those who do try lose the time later. Discouraged because of enemies in the rear, they flounder at the foot of the class, until they voluntarily leave school or are quietly obliged to stop. Those unfortunate ones, who, because of absence, or for other reasons, fall a short distance behind their classmates, must stumble along at the foot of the class until the end of the year. Failing to be promoted, they must spend a year upon unprofitable, lifeless reviews, to escape which a great many leave school. It is very

easy to lose a year, but almost impossible to gain one. In a later chapter the importance of reclassification will be emphasized and attention called to the fact that frequent reclassification is an absolute necessity to the existence of any flexible method of grading. In a previous chapter, some of the defects of the typical graded school have been mentioned. The most of these defects are the result of the failure to make possible the reclassification of pupils at any time when their best interests demand a change of work.

#### HALF-YEAR INTERVAL.

Very few educationalists now advocate or defend the year interval, as generally managed. Though the large majority of schools still have the longer interval, many have turned for relief to the half-year interval.

#### Characteristics—

With the half-year interval, the pupils in each room are generally separated into two classes a half year apart. The course of study is divided into twice as many parts as under the usual plan, and there are regular promotions twice each year. In other ways it differs but little from the usual method.

## Advantages—

In theory, at least, the half-year interval is an improvement over the longer interval. It is easier for scholars to skip a half-year's work than it is for them to omit the work of an entire year. Therefore it is easier for pupils to pass from one class to a higher one, unless prevented by promotion examinations or other arbitrary regulations, which tend to make it difficult for teachers to classify their pupils in such a way that they may keep them busy on suitable work. Under this plan less time will be lost by the pupils, for the reason that failure to be promoted means the loss of but one-half a year in place of a year.

## Disadvantages—

Although, for the reasons mentioned, the half-year interval has important advantages, yet, as generally managed, it has not given many more satisfactory results than the usual plan. While some scholars are benefited by reviewing a half year's work, the large majority who fall but a short distance behind in their work are injured by being compelled to review half a year's work when they are but a few weeks behind. While, in theory, reclassification is made easier; yet it is still quite difficult, and the number of reclassifications reported is not much larger than under the usual method.

For this reason, nearly all of the serious objections urged against the usual plan apply with almost equal force against this method.

However, it should be remembered that the possibility of having a much more pliant method with this plan are greater than under the usual one, and perhaps the only additional objection to the half-year interval is, that the pupils must change teachers twice each year.

#### THE SHORTER INTERVAL.

##### Characteristics—

Two or three prominent cities have tried the shorter interval with more or less success. With the shorter interval the pupils of each class are divided in such a way that the divisions are not more than ten or twelve weeks apart. Each class has assigned to it a certain part of the course of study, which is divided and assigned to the classes as in the usual method of grading. Pupils are promoted to advanced work at times arbitrarily fixed, as under the usual plan, though more frequently.

##### Advantages—

Properly managed, this plan would make reclassification comparatively easy, as the divisions are so close together that many of the stronger pupils could pass from one division to the next higher, if given the opportunity to do so. Though reports

from the cities using this method prove that, as managed, it is almost as procrustean as the usual method, all must agree that, with suitable provision for reclassification, there is no good reason why pupils should not be more accurately graded under this method.

Disadvantages—

While many objections are urged against this plan because the results have not been satisfactory, the only serious objection is founded upon the generally accepted belief that, to change teachers and classes several times each year, not only seriously interferes with the pupils' progress in lessons, but also has a blighting influence upon their characters.

## Chapter V.

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### THE USUAL METHOD CONDEMNED BY EDUCATORS.

#### THE DEFECTS APPARENT TO ALL.

Some years ago a diligent search was made throughout the United States for the purpose of discovering a satisfactory method of grading, and information was gathered concerning the needs and conditions existing in a great many cities in all parts of the country. With but few exceptions, all educators felt the need of some reforms in the manner of grading, and agreed that it was time teachers stopped trying to fit millions of children to procrustean beds of grade; but practical methods were not offered for the correction of the acknowledged evils of defective grading. Many earnest educators realized that it was a matter of vital importance to every boy and girl in the schools, that some changes should be urged which would make it possible for every American boy and girl to go as

far and as fast as ability and opportunity would permit. This, indeed, is the high ideal of our grand republic, but the attempt at uniformity in school work not only makes this impossible, but also violates the fundamental principles of common sense, nature and pedagogy.

Several years ago, under the direction of the United States Commissioner of Education, a number of questions bearing upon this subject were sent to the superintendents of several hundred cities. To these questions, five hundred and sixty-five answers were received. As these answers came from those who are largely responsible for the methods of organization in common use, a consideration of some of the conclusions reached cannot fail to be beneficial in the study of this important problem. For this reason, several of the questions are given.

"Is it sufficient to classify with intervals of a year's work in grade of advancement between the classes, or ought the intervals to be made as small as can be done and secure classes of the normal size—say twenty to thirty pupils in each?" Less than fourteen per cent. favored the class interval of a year. Why then should it be used by the majority of schools? It is claimed, with truth, that some Boards of Education prevent their superintendents from doing what they know to be best.



Is it not time that those in charge of the schools should be left free to work for the best interests of the children?

"Is it the natural effect of classifying with intervals of a year or more between classes, that the bright pupils are held back and not given work enough to do to develop their capacity, while the teacher is obliged to expend the greater part of his time on the slow and less competent pupils?" Less than seven per cent. answered "No" to this question. Not seven per cent. of five hundred and sixty-five dared defend the usual plan, though most of them were using it. Not seven per cent. could deny that with the yearly interval "the bright pupils are held back and not given enough work to do to develop their capacity;" yet this plan is in general use. It seems past belief, but it is only too true. Is it any wonder that some educators, willing to risk the everlasting condemnation of critics who care more for their own convenience than for the interests of the children, denounce in unmeasured terms this outrage upon the defenceless children?

"Under the system of year intervals between classes, is not the progress of the whole school kept down to the pace of the slowest and weakest pupils?" Less than nine per cent say that the usual plan does not compel all to walk in intellect-

ual lock-step with the slowest pupils. Is it not time that every person responsible for the organization of schools, not only favors a change to some more sensible method, but also works earnestly for the establishment of a more rational plan?

"Does not this system discourage the less mature and sluggish minds of a class, while it wastes the opportunities of the bright minds?" Less than nine per cent were willing to deny that this plan does "discourage the less mature and waste the opportunities of the bright minds," and yet this method survives. Survives? Yes, and until lately was in almost universal use. More than that, it is even now in use, not only in the very large majority of cities and towns, but even in the majority of those systems represented by these superintendents who have thus condemned it unservedly.

Superintendents, principals, members of Boards of Education, teachers and friends of the schools: in the name of the long-suffering children, consider the answers of these educators, and see to it that there is provided some plan which will not crush the intellectual life out of the children!

#### WHERE THE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS.

It is, indeed, a serious matter to place the blame for the continuance of such an unjust, unpedagog-

ical and blighting method of classification. Some would put it all on the superintendents, who, while they realize the weakness of the usual plan do not demand a change, because they know that their positions will be endangered if they advocate unpopular measures. Others blame the Boards of Education, who, by making the superintendent's office a political one, by electing him for a short term, and in other ways, make it almost impossible for him to work for the best interests of the schools. Again, there are others who would place all the blame on the people, who, though they cheerfully support the schools, because they love them, yet forget that it is not only their privilege but their duty to see to it that those who are chosen to manage the schools do so in such a way as to subserve the best interests of the pupils, for whom the schools exist. It is not at all unlikely that all of these must share the responsibility; but the matter of great importance is that the need of a change should be so keenly felt by all, that those who have the interests of the children in their safe-keeping will not dare remain passive longer.

## Chapter VI.

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### UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO CORRECT THE DEFECTIVE GRADING.

There is, however, great cause for encouragement, since many conscientious superintendents have lately begun to realize the importance of having a more sensible plan of grading and promoting pupils. A number have urged the correctness of different theories, though, until quite recently, but few had shown enough confidence in their own theories to attempt to put them into practice. It is one thing to point the way, and an entirely different undertaking to lead the assault upon the strongly defended Gibaltars of conservatism. Some have tried to evolve a system of classification and promotion which would make it possible to place and keep pupils with those of about equal ability. Though unsuccessful in their attempts to work out a method which would make it easy for pupils to go forward just as fast as they are able to do the work well, they have done much to make

possible a more flexible plan of grading, by showing what was not satisfactory. Many of their experiments are pregnant with lessons which should be learned by those who are responsible for the organization of schools. Therefore, it seems advisable to consider briefly some of the more important attempts to work out a more flexible method, which would make reclassification feasible.

#### PROMOTION OF INDIVIDUALS.

Many superintendents adopted what seemed to be the easiest way of meeting the just criticisms of the usual method, by stating that they would permit teachers to promote pupils at any time. It was soon discovered that this seemingly great concession was entirely barren of beneficial results, for the reason that no pupils who had been properly placed could skip the work of an entire year with profit to themselves. The records of a large number of pupils, in different cities, prove that this was of but little benefit, save to those who were very much ahead of their classmates. Where the work apportioned to each grade was sufficient for the time allotted for its completion, not one pupil in five hundred was able to successfully skip the work of that grade. But few tried to do so, and of those who did nearly all lost the time later and were more seriously injured by thus being discour-

aged than they would have been had they remained with their former classmates, who soon not only overtook them, but found no trouble in passing them.

Since such is the case, it is greatly to be regretted that many earnest superintendents are still satisfied with such a provision for reclassification. The superintendent or principal who does not now favor the promotion of pupils just as soon as they are ready for advanced work, can scarcely be found. The time has now come when all should realize the fact that it is not sufficient to allow pupils to strive for benefits which all know they cannot secure. The futility of such a method was well pointed out by Dr. J. T. Prince, State Agent of the Massachusetts Board of Education, in a report just published. After making a careful and exhaustive study of the plans used and the results obtained in the cities and towns throughout this country, he stated what those familiar with the facts know to be the truth, when he said as follows: "Quite a number of superintendents report that the matter is left to the teachers, with the request that pupils be promoted whenever they are qualified; but, in such cases, there is either no report of the number of individual promotions, or else the number of such promotions is so small they may be said to be rare exceptions." How could it be otherwise?

What is the sense of giving a teacher permission to do what the method of grading and promoting makes impossible to accomplish? Of what benefit is all this child-study, if there is no possibility of ministering to the needs of the children even when those needs are accurately located?

┌ A SHORTER CLASS INTERVAL. ┐

Finding that it was impossible to reclassify pupils when the classes were a year apart, an effort was made to secure better results by shortening the interval between the classes. In a preceding chapter, the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of the shorter interval have been discussed, and attention called to the fact that, properly managed, the shorter interval has some important advantages. However, so far as is known, no one has proved by results obtained that the shorter interval has been so managed as to make reclassification easy. With the shorter interval, the classes have been kept closer together, but the pupils of each class have still been forced to move in intellectual lock-step month after month and year after year. Therefore, the plan has proved no more satisfactory than the usual method. This was necessarily the case, not because better results were not obtainable, but, principally because no satisfactory provision was made for the promotion

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and retrogression of pupils at any time when necessary to keep the classification accurate. If such provision had been made, so that teachers and principals could easily do what they found to be best, there would have been frequent reclassifications of pupils, and the beneficial results would have followed just as surely as that the day follows the rising of the sun.

As has been intimated, the results of the use of the shorter intervals have not been as satisfactory as it was reasonable to expect they would be. The records of a large number of schools having the half-year interval prove that, for every hundred pupils enrolled, there were from one hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and ten years lost. There were very few, if any, promotions or retrogressions between the times for regular promotion. From twenty to fifty per cent of the pupils failed to be promoted, and but few pupils were able to gain any time by moving faster than the majority.

In a prominent city having a shorter interval between the classes, it was claimed that the plan of grading was far superior to the usual method. However, from the published reports of the schools of that city, as well as from other equally official information, the following facts are given as conclusive proof that even the shortest interval, as it had been managed, gave no relief from the evil



effects of imperfect classification. There were very few reclassifications. Forty-eight per cent of the pupils in the higher grammar grades were not promoted. Less than fifty-two per cent of all the scholars enrolled were promoted during the year; and eighty per cent of those in the highest grammar grades had lost from one to six years—there being over two hundred years lost for each one hundred pupils enrolled. While these facts tend to raise doubts as to the efficacy of the shorter interval, such should not be the case, as the possibilities of the shorter interval are so much greater than those of the year interval.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that, though the class interval is an important factor in working out a proper method of grading, it is by no means the only one. Though a step in the right direction, it is only one of several required to reach the desired end.

#### THE PROMOTION TEST ABANDONED.

After a time educationists, both in this country and in England, realized the fact that the promotion examination was one of the most serious obstacles to the reclassification of pupils. Even with other conditions favorable, it was found almost impossible to promote pupils at any time save at that one arbitrarily fixed for the general pro-

motion. The shorter interval, with more examinations, made possible more frequent changes for classes, but gave no additional flexibility, for reasons which have been pointed out. Teachers whose efficiency was to be judged by the records which their pupils would make in the final tests, when teachers and pupils passed in review before the Board of Education and the superintendent, could not be blamed for not wishing to receive pupils, who, though ahead of their classmates, were behind the next class ahead. By receiving such, they would not only greatly increase their own burdens, but would rob all their pupils of the attention which they sadly needed to prepare them for the dreaded examination. On the other hand, the teacher who had a number of bright pupils, would naturally wish to keep them, that they might raise the average which the class would make in the examination, which so often has been used to condemn teachers unjustly.

But though the promotion examination was seen to be a most serious mistake, and while many agreed that it was the cause of grave defects and the bulwark of most unpedagogical methods, yet its abandonment is only one of several steps leading to a more pliant plan of grading. This fact is amply proved by the records in fifty towns and cities, where its abandonment gave little or no ad-

ditional flexibility. However, it should be remembered that the shorter interval and a more sensible basis for promotion are important steps in the right direction.

#### UNGRADED ROOM IN EACH BUILDING.

Finding it absolutely necessary to do something for those falling behind, a few tried the experiment of having an ungraded room in each school where it was possible to have it. This plan has had a very limited trial, and, so far as can be learned, has never been used to any considerable extent by any city. Properly managed, by a strong teacher, it has proved a benefit to the few who were placed in the class until they could be prepared for the work of some regular class. The facts that it gave relief to but few of the many needing help, the lack of additional classrooms, and the considerable extra expense, prevented its general adoption, even in the cities where it was most strongly favored.

#### ADDITIONAL TEACHERS FOR EACH SCHOOL.

Some who were desirous of trying the plan mentioned above, and were unable to find vacant classrooms, appointed additional teachers to assist the laggards, in the hope that they would thus be enabled to keep pace with the rest of the class. Like

#### ATTEMPTS TO CORRECT DEFECTIVE GRADING. 53

the plan which it resembles, it was beneficial to but a very limited number of pupils; for every teacher of experience knows that such plans cannot help one-twentieth of those who need assistance.

However, these experiments are of some utility to the slower scholars, although they entirely neglect the brighter ones, who suffer serious injury because of continually marking time.

#### BRIGHTER PUPILS GIVEN ADDITIONAL WORK.

In the hope of keeping the brighter pupils busy, a few have permitted them to take up additional subjects whenever their attainments and capacities were such that they were likely to be injured by being held down to the pace of the slowest. This is a commendable method of making some provision for this class of pupils, who are, perhaps, the ones most injured by the usual method of grading. While great pains should be taken to brighten the dull, this should be done in such a way as not to bedim the brighter scholars. In the average school so much attention has been given to the polishing of the pebbles that no regard could be given to the diamonds which were gradually being dimmed. In lieu of a better plan, extra lessons will often serve the purpose of saving some from the blighting effect of enforced idleness. It should not be forgotten that success without effort is only

less injurious than effort without success. The greatest objection to this method is, that it brings to the over-worked teacher a great deal of extra work, worry and planning. Indeed, it is claimed by some that to lay out and look after the extra work properly almost doubles the strain on the teacher. All agree that if scholars can be kept busy on the regular work it will not only be best for the pupils, but it will be most satisfactory to the teachers as well.

#### DOUBLE-TRACK COURSE OF STUDY.

Two or three cities are trying a plan quite different from any yet mentioned. The course of study for the grammar grades is double-tracked, as it were, and divided in such a way that it may be completed in from four to six years. Provision is also made for "switching" from one track to the other. As a means of making it possible for some pupils to complete the work of the grammar grades in less than the prescribed time, this plan is a success; but as a method of making possible the readjustment of pupils in such a way as to keep the classification accurate, the published results prove it to be an utter failure. It is flexible only at the one point and time, and makes no provision for reclassification in the primary grades, where frequent readjustment is most needed.

## RETURN TO UNGRADED SCHOOL.

Thoroughly disgusted with the evils resulting from the defective grading, and convinced that there was no satisfactory solution of the problem, a few returned to the methods of the ungraded schools. They soon found that because of the large number of classes good results were harder to secure than under the usual plan.

Unmindful of the many advantages of the class recitation, some abandoned it and returned to individual instruction, in the belief that this would be best for the pupils; the effort being made to develop the individual by permitting each one to work alone. This certainly implies a false idea of education, which is to develop children so as to prepare them for proper living in society. The class is the best place for pupils to learn to correct wrong ideas, by seeing things through the eyes of the other members of the class. It is for this reason that children learn more from others than they do from their teachers or from their books. If the work is adapted to the class, each pupil helps all, and, in return, all are benefited by each. The man who does not learn from others is sure to be a miserable failure; and it is the same in the school. It should be remembered, then, that while there is a place for individual work, individual testing and

individual instruction, there is also much benefit to be derived from work in groups and classes.

#### THE REQUISITES OF A PROPER PLAN OF GRADING.

A satisfactory plan of grading must make possible an accurate classification of pupils, so that those of very nearly equal ability and advancement may be placed in the same class; it must make such provision for frequent reclassification that the teacher will be able to keep the classification accurate; and it must permit individuals and classes to go forward as fast as they can do the work well. It will not be perfectly satisfactory, however, unless it retains the advantages of class instruction without sacrificing the interest of the individual. It will be ideal if it meets these demands of a proper plan of grading in such a way as to be capable of general adoption, and that without increasing the expense of the schools or the strain upon the teachers.

#### OTHER PLANS FAIL TO MEET REQUIREMENTS.

Though each of the plans already mentioned is the result of an honest effort to provide a more pliant plan of grading, yet not one of them makes possible frequent reclassification of individuals in order that the classification may be kept accurate. Of necessity, each one must result

in keeping together pupils of unequal ability and attainments. There is not one which does not expect individuals and classes to finish a definite portion of the work by a certain time, arbitrarily fixed, without any consideration of the individual or the class. Is it not because of the failures in these matters that the results have not been encouraging?

#### FEASIBILITY OF SECURING A SATISFACTORY PLAN.

Surrounded as all are by limiting conditions, is it possible to have a more pliant plan of grading, which will combine the advantages of the individual and class systems of instruction? Is it possible to give more attention to individual needs without endangering the interests of the masses? Can the work be suited to the ability of the pupils so that all may go just about as fast as it is best for them? Is it possible to have a system which will exist, not for itself, but for the proper development of the children in the school? Too many have been ready to accept, as final, negative answers to these questions. That such a plan cannot be secured by a single step, even though it be a long one in the right direction, is amply proved by the experiments made by many earnest educators. However, it may be asserted without fear of successful contradiction, that it is possible to have a satisfactory plan, if those whose duty it is to do so will



study this problem with the care and persistency which its importance warrants.

In the following chapters the primary requisites of a proper plan of grading are discussed, and there is given an explanation of a plan which has stood the test of years of trial, and which under most adverse and varying conditions has given most excellent results. In the earnest hope that they will be of assistance to those who are striving to work out a method which will meet the conditions by which they are surrounded, additional chapters are given for the purpose of explaining devices which experience has proved to be of great value.

## Chapter VII.

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### CLASSIFICATION OF PUPILS.

All thoughtful educators must realize the fact that the proper classification of pupils is one of the most important factors in securing a satisfactory plan of grading. Many now see clearly the absolute necessity of having pupils closely classified and of keeping those nearly equal in ability and attainments together all the time. However, with classrooms crowded to the doors, and surrounded as all are by many and unfavorable limiting conditions, it has not seemed possible to reach this desired end. Different methods have been tried without satisfactory results. The following suggestions are given for the reason that they have proved perfectly feasible in schools varying in size from three to thirty rooms, where the classes were very large and conditions were most unfavorable.

#### PUPILS OF SAME ABILITY GROUPED TOGETHER.

The pupils should be carefully classified, and those of about equal ability and attainments should be grouped by themselves in separate rooms.

The placing of pupils of the same grade in a room, instead of mixing pupils of two or three grades, as many do, has many advantages. One of the most important is that all can recite together in those branches in which it is easy to hold the attention, and, therefore, in which it is possible to secure simultaneous mental activity on the part of all. In this way, all the claims of simultaneous instruction may be met without jeopardizing the interests of the individual. The time thus saved can be used to great advantage in other lessons, where it is absolutely necessary that the teacher shall always know exactly what knowledge each pupil possesses, for the reason that, in these subjects, further progress is entirely dependent on what has been learned.

In essential branches, the pupils of each room should be subdivided, according to ability and acquirements, into several small sections. The number of sections in each grade will vary with the number of rooms of the same grade in the building, the year of work, the importance of the subject, the efficiency of the teacher, and with other limiting conditions.

The number of divisions in each subject should also be determined by these conditions, after a careful consideration of the subjects in each grade and a study of the records of children of different

grades. This study of the pupils' records will show that nearly all the difficulty arises at certain points in each grade, so that by providing for individual instruction at these danger points, all difficulty may be removed.

Likewise, the number of pupils in each division varies with limiting conditions. The larger the number of pupils to select from, the greater the number that can go together without injury. All must acknowledge that the more nearly uniform the pupils of a class are in ability and attainments, the better can the instruction be suited to their needs, the greater is the power of emulation, the larger is the number that can successfully be taught together, the easier it is to hold the attention and concentrate it upon the subject presented, and therefore the better the training given. No matter how close the grading, there will always be sufficient difference in the pupils of each group to give that quickening influence which is such an important result of class teaching.

The accurate grading of pupils into classes of from eight to twenty, instead of roughly herding them in classes of from forty to sixty, furnishes a practical method of reaching the individual, and thus makes possible the mental growth that is dependent upon constant, healthy, beneficial, intellectual activity. It not only secures from each his

best work, but it prevents overwork on the part of the nervous pupils, and on the part of others who, for any reason, should not have severe mental labor.

It is not necessary to divide the grades into small classes except in the essential branches, which vary somewhat with the courses of study and are different in the several grades. The number of recitations need not be greater than is usual in those schools which have more than one grade to the room. Take, for example, a grade in which there are six studies. Since many schools have pupils of two different grades in each room, twelve daily recitations are required. In those schools which have three grades in each room, provision has to be made for at least eighteen recitations. Under this plan of grading, three or four divisions are made in each of the two most important subjects, and two divisions in the next most important subject. As the pupils in each room are nearly equal in acquirements, it is very satisfactory to have them recite together in the other, the less important branches, in which it is easy to hold the attention, and in which future work is not so dependent upon what has been learned. Thus, by providing for but twelve or fifteen recitations daily, the desired end is reached. Since most buildings have from two to four rooms of the same grade, it is easy to have, not three or four, but ten or twelve divisions in the

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viding for small classes and individual work in these subjects, the causes of failure were removed, and but few pupils were kept back. While the apparent increase in the number of recitations led teachers to look with disfavor on the plan before they understood it, at the end of the first year's experience with it they not only favored it, but ninety-four per cent of them gave in writing their reasons for preferring it to any other plan of which they had any knowledge.

Since all pupils are placed in divisions with those of the same ability, the instruction can be carefully adjusted to the needs of each, and the best teaching is made possible. The most careless observer of children knows that they naturally love to learn what is new, and are always interested in doing what with reasonable effort they can do. When suitable work is assigned to them the tendency to idleness is greatly lessened, and many a listless "time-killer" is transformed into an earnest worker; the necessity of punishment is greatly diminished in all classes, and has entirely disappeared from many. Indeed, this plan of grading practically solves the problem of the bad boy, and proves that the majority of the so-called bad boys are the logical result of a bad method. The bright boys are not kept busy under the usual plan; therefore they are the ones who get into mischief, for the

idle brain is still the devil's workshop. Some say pupils are injured by overstudy, but for every one so injured a thousand are ruined by enforced idleness.

The importance, then, of accurate classification must ever be kept in view. For years pupils have been crucified by being placed with those of unequal advancement, yet it was claimed they were classified. Now it is rightly demanded that they be placed with their peers, that their progress may be more certain. No longer will it be acceptable to condemn pupils as dunces, because they are not sufficiently advanced to keep up with their companions. They must be placed where their ability and their attainment make it possible for them to do good work.



## Chapter VIII.

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### RECLASSIFICATION OF PUPILS.

#### A MATTER OF VITAL IMPORTANCE.

The importance of securing a proper classification of pupils has been emphasized, and reasons have been presented for favoring a plan which has given a more satisfactory classification than any other method yet suggested. However, it is not sufficient merely to make the classification accurate. In the past many have made the mistake of supposing that this would answer; but such is not the case. No plan of grading can justly claim consideration unless it makes it possible to keep the pupils working with those of equal attainments. A hundred different determining factors influence the progress of the individuals of a class. Hence arises the need of providing for such a readjustment of pupils as to make it possible to place individuals where they can work to the best advantage and receive the greatest good from the instruction. All classifica-

tion should be only temporary; for pupils should not remain in classes for which they are not suited. In the past the machinery of the graded school has been started and then left to run itself. This is a serious error, for it needs constant readjustment. Reclassification is the only means of saving the pupils from the blighting effects of defective grading. For this reason, the feasibility of reclassification is the most important test of any method of grading. This is the secret of any flexible plan of grading, which is intended to suit the needs of the children instead of compelling them to fit a procrustean bed of grades. This truth should be kept constantly in mind by those who are studying this problem, for the greatest defect of the usual method is found in the fact that the reclassification of pupils between the times for regular promotion is almost impossible. Indeed, the usual plan of grading seems built upon the supposition that pupils will go together month after month and year after year, without diverging in attainments or in ability. That they cannot do so all intelligent observers must admit. That the schools fail utterly to provide for reclassification to meet the needs of the children none will dare deny. Until recently no plan had been suggested, which would meet this all-important primary requisite of proper grading.

However, there is encouragement in the fact that

some of the leading educators of this country are realizing the importance of this matter and suggesting remedies, though none of these have been able to point to results obtained by actual practice. Among the very first to appreciate the importance of this matter was Dr. W. H. Harris, who, while superintendent of schools in St. Louis, gave the following reasons for urging certain changes in that city. They show that this educational philosopher, who stands without a peer, not only appreciated the importance of constant readjustment in order that pupils might be accurately graded, but that he also saw the importance of permitting them to cover the ground as fast as they could do the work well. How this can be done, does not appear, but it is greatly to be regretted that these reports were not available until a short time ago, for every page will well repay a careful reading.

#### THE CORRECT PRINCIPLE.

"The principle is clearly this: Not a procrustean bed of grades, on which the school is to be stretched so as to reduce the number of grades of advancement to ten or any other special number, but a thorough classification of all the pupils into classes on a certain quota as a basis, whether this be thirty or twenty-five, or whatever other number is considered the best. The endeavor will be to have

the classes separated by as small an interval as possible; but four, six, or even ten weeks' work is small enough for all practical purposes; and in order to make this arrangement uniform the pupils in upper grades, when too few to form classes with the required quota, should be brought together in central schools; and this principle should be applied as far as possible; if the highest grade in the high school consisted of sixty pupils or more, the division of it into two classes would be required.

"This process of continual readjustment of classification in our schools will render the whole school system elastic and mobile. Like the current of a river there will be everywhere forward motion—in the middle the current is more rapid, at the sides the current flows more slowly. The work of a grade laid down for a year's study will be accomplished in three or three and a half quarters by the brightest; by the dullest and slowest in five quarters. There will be no temptation to push on a slow pupil or drag him beyond his powers; no temptation to promote a pupil to a new grade's work before thoroughly completing what is below him.

"By this plan would be checked a pernicious system of holding back pupils from examination for the high school, simply for the purpose of gaining a reputation for the school through the high per cent of its pupils in the competitive examination.

"Doubtless there is a certain degree of thoroughness requisite in the lower branches before the pupil can profitably take up the studies of the next higher grade. After attaining this per cent it is possible to keep the pupil drilling over the lower work—in order to secure a certain mechanical thoroughness—so long as to waste much time that might be better expended for the pupil's culture and growth on the higher studies.

"There are still some points on which doubts may rest. For example, it may be urged that this system would cause a collection of the dull and stupid pupils into classes by themselves—a deplorable result. But this is one of the evils which this system is adapted to correct. The fact that the best pupils from below are allowed to rise through the masses above them as fast as their ability can carry them is surely not likely to prevent the slower pupils, who are their companions, from exerting all their energies and making considerable progress. The stream of bright pupils from below is inexhaustible. From the primary grades it ascends, continually passing fixed points or points that move on more slowly. In every class there will be its quota of bright pupils, some leading the class, and some just sustaining themselves in it, having recently joined it. But in the old system all the bright pupils had attained the top of the class and the dull ones had

fallen hopelessly to the bottom long before the needed reclassification took place."

#### THE THEORY WELL STATED.

While superintendent of the schools of Omaha, Mr. F. A. Fitzpatrick made a careful study of this problem. The following quotation from his article in the *Northwestern Journal of Education* proves conclusively that the need of reclassification was clearly apprehended by this educational leader:

"Here lies the weakness of the graded system, because we are compelled by our limitations to place children of varying attainments, will power, capabilities, and opportunities, into the same class. The defect is inherent; all that is possible is to reduce the difficulty to its lowest terms. The number of pupils in any individual school system is the constant factor in the treatment of this question of classification; the character, size, and location of school buildings, variable elements. The shorter the interval between classes, the better the school will perform its function of adapting itself to the needs of the community. The more easy it is to classify pupils of varying attainments and capacities, the more easy it is to make special promotions where pupils are able to do more work. The more plastic a system of schools becomes in the direction of allowing properly regulated special promotions,

the better the system. The limitation here upon the creation of classes with short intervals between them is that the number of pupils in each class must not fall below twenty; otherwise we shall trench over on the other side. In a properly managed school system the classes are perpetually undergoing disintegration and reintegration. Crystallization into any one absolute form is death, just the same as it is in physical life. When a new class of pupils is organized, there may be a complete homogeneity, but after ten short weeks have passed away the pupils in this class will appear in three different and divergent forms. A certain percentage may be classified as very good pupils, another definite quantity may be classified as average pupils, and still another portion as deficient pupils. Approximately twenty per cent will belong to the first element, fifty per cent to the second element, and thirty per cent to the third element of the class. And should this class of pupils be again divided on these lines and formed into three separate and distinct classes, it will be only a few short months before each class will break up again into the same relatively strongly marked three elements; very good, average, and poor pupils. This phenomenon may be styled the persistency of disintegration. Its parallel may be found in life, where the tissues are continually wasting away, and need to be rebuilt

from time to time if the physical organism is to escape extinction. The remedy for this disintegration is reintegration—reclassification, the gathering together of somewhat similar elements to form a new class, which itself again disintegrates only to be rebuilt again, and so ad infinitum. In life, were we to wait until the tissues in any particular organ were wasted away before beginning the work of rehabilitation, the organism would die. Just so in the work of classification: if we wait until the disintegration has been completed, we shall not be able to reunite the dead, lifeless parts into a living, breathing whole. The breaking up of classes must be foreseen and the remedy foreshadowed all through the year, but more especially the last three months of the year. In the rebuilding of classes in a school system, the short interval between classes becomes a very potent factor. There is nothing in the whole work of a supervisor that demands clearer insight and greater breadth of vision than the taking care of this disease which so remorselessly attacks classification.”

#### MANY MERE THEORIES.

In view of the fact that, for years, some have realized the importance of providing for reclassification, it is very surprising that no method suggested has proved satisfactory. Since the crying



need has been appreciated by the many, several have presented fine-spun theories, but few have given anything more satisfactory. Though theory without practice is of little value, yet, as there can be no intelligent practice without rational theory, it may be well to keep in mind what is now generally agreed upon as theoretically correct.

#### THE IDEAL PLAN OF RECLASSIFICATION.

Those who have studied this problem most carefully agree that the ideal method of grading must make it easy to promote or retrograde pupils whenever their progress or lack of progress results in their being ahead or behind their classmates. To be satisfactory, this reclassification must be possible at any time, as frequently as needed, and without a too frequent change of teachers. A proper method of grading will demand more, but this much is demanded with regard to reclassification.

No plan could well be farther from the ideal than the usual plan, under which it is possible to reclassify pupils only at a time arbitrarily fixed by the authorities, without regard to the needs of the children. Since the usual plan has justly become so unpopular, many say they are willing to allow promotions at any time. It is well to permit pupils to pass, at any time, to work for which they are well prepared, but it would be far better if the methods

used did not make it impossible for them to do so. It is one thing to permit children to try for a goal by attempting to reach it by impossible leaps. It is an entirely different thing to so grade the path leading to the goal that reasonable effort is sure to be rewarded. The results of the plan herein explained prove the need of reclassification, and also show its feasibility under this method.

## Chapter IX.

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### THE PROMOTION OF PUPILS.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMINATIONS FOR PROMOTION.

The promotion examination determines the reclassification of pupils. Therefore, no question is more pertinent to the discussion of this problem. In view of its importance, it is not to be wondered at, that, of all the difficult problems which confront thoughtful superintendents and principals, no other one has given rise to more discussion. For years the promotion examination held full sway, and few, if any, questioned the propriety of having the principals, teachers and pupils pass in review before the superintendent at least once each year. However, as the injustice and folly of such a course became apparent, even to the less observant, many good reasons for opposing such a plan were forthcoming. It is greatly to be regretted that, in spite of many strong arguments in favor of abandoning the promotion tests, they are still defended by some

earnest educators and used by many more. At the latest meeting of the Superintendents' Department of the National Educational Association, a superintendent from one of our prominent cities said, "If a superintendent does not look after tests and prepare examinations, what will he do?" The question was well answered, to the evident satisfaction of those present, by Dr. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, who said, "Well, I do not know what he will do, but what he should do, is resign, and the sooner the better for the schools."

THE PROMOTION EXAMINATIONS SHOULD BE ABANDONED.

It is of vital importance that examinations be abandoned as tests of the fitness of pupils for promotion. This is a primary requisite to any pliant plan of grading, for they make the time limit the same for all, and are, therefore, the cause of the attempted uniformity in school work. It is encouraging, that, from all sides come unmistakable indications of a strong reaction against promotion examinations. As a change is demanded by those most interested in the schools, all who are in any way responsible for the organization of schools should consider this question most carefully. The teaching tests are a necessary part of all good instruction; but, whether considered from the stand-

point of the pupil, the parent, or the teacher, the examination tests must be condemned unreservedly. The attempt to cure the evil of defective grading, which has fastened itself upon our educational system, without entirely cutting off the promotion examination, is as senseless as trying to cure any other malady without striking at the root of the disease. What a great change there has been in this during the past decade! What educator has not lately changed his position with respect to this subject? Where can any one find a city which clings to the "finals" as all formerly did? In many the authorities have been obliged either to abandon them, or to make them small factors in determining promotion.

#### PROMOTION TESTS STILL IN USE.

Since promotion tests have justly become so unpopular, many of those who are still slaves to this examination fiend try to convince themselves and others that they are not greatly influenced by these tests. Few can be found willing to openly defend the promotion tests. However, many seem to be tied to them more closely than they wish to acknowledge or feel they should be. This fact was clearly demonstrated a short time ago, when a body of prominent educators, from school systems having several hundred thousand pupils, were discussing

this important question. One of the speakers condemned, in strong language, the use of the promotion tests. Apparently, his opinions were heartily indorsed by all present, for the applause was deafening. After the applause had died out, a wag in the back part of the hall arose and said, "Being acquainted with the most of the school systems here represented, I am surprised to learn that, without exception, all condemned the use of promotion examinations. Will those who do not make any use of examinations for promotion please arise, that they may be counted?" But one superintendent arose. The eloquent speaker and the rest were "gradually doing away with them."

#### THE SCHOOLS EXIST FOR THE CHILDREN.

Some argue that the examinations should be continued for the reason that, by the use of them, the superintendent or principal can best follow the work with least trouble to himself. But the schools are for the children, and not for superintendents and principals. It is time that the methods practiced and the reasons advanced for them cease to lead the thoughtful observer to believe that the children are for the schools, and the schools for superintendents and others. Surely, the highest interests of the children should determine the course to be followed in the management of the schools.

## PROMOTION TESTS NOT BEST FOR THE CHILDREN.

There are many reasons for believing that the promotion examinations are not best for the children. A few are mentioned, and others will suggest themselves to the reader.

As generally conducted, they are addressed to a system of facts committed to memory. If the object of education be to develop this particular kind of memory at the expense of all the other faculties; to fill the mind with words without ideas, that the child may repeat, parrot-like, the thoughts of others; to teach to imitate and to repeat, rather than to think; to enable the children to "get through examinations"; then final examinations, as tests for promotion, are good and satisfactory. But if the object of education be to develop all those powers with which in greater or less degree God has endowed us; to "bring up children and form men"; to "develop in the individual all the perfection of which he is susceptible"; then examinations, upon which so much depend, defeat the very object for which we are supposed to work.

They prevent broad and progressive teaching, and make of the teacher a "grind." Every teacher who is to be judged by the results of the final test, must get into rut work and turn out machine pupils. No time can be spent in securing the clear explanation, the logical analysis, the useful and in-

teresting knowledge; all these must be left behind; all are neglected for that which will pay in examination percentage. These examinations, consisting of a definite number of questions adapted to numerical marking, can never be satisfactory, for they are nothing more than an attempt to measure mental activity by mechanical means. Being of necessity one-sided and narrow, they will be followed by narrow teaching; for the character of the examination determines the character of the work necessary to prepare for the examination.

What knowledge the children do possess, if it may be called knowledge, has been forced by the hurried committing of "possible questions," "pointers," "tips," and "one-word answers," which cannot be understood or retained. As with the stomach, so with the mind; not that which enters, but that which is digested and assimilated, strengthens and, develops. Over-loading either the stomach or the mind leads to indigestion, disgust and nausea. Is it any wonder that so early many take a dislike to all learning and therefore study only what they must? What teacher does not know of many whom the fear of examination has driven out of school? How often the teacher's anxiety about the final averages of the poor pupils causes him to urge that they be removed to a lower grade, or quietly forced out of school. Could the teacher have felt



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that he would not be judged by the "finals," he would have been glad to have had them remain and learn what they could.

Final examinations tend to much unnecessary drudgery on the part of the pupils and teachers, and cause many mental wrecks. The pupils know that, no matter what the condition of their health, a failure at this time means utter failure; means the spending of another year in going over the same work. That strength and blood which should go to build up body and brain is therefore expended in senseless over-pressure. By insensible degrees the physical powers of the nervous pupils are undermined, and they fail to be promoted, while their scheming classmates, who worry over nothing and have been wasting time during the year, because of self-confidence and little regard for what is right, by hook or crook, manage to get the answers and pass. Few, except conscientious teachers and anxious parents, can realize the dreadful results of the mental strain upon nervous temperaments.

The pupils who have been absent, or who for any other reason are unable to swallow the mass of indigestible material catechised into the rest, fail, even though their ability to do the work in the next grade is far above that of those who get the answers. Surely the question to be asked concerning the promotion of a child is not, What answers can he get?

but, Has he the ability to do the work in the next grade? For it is indeed a serious thing for a child to lose a year in school. Little wonder that almost invariably their faculties are deadened and their ambition destroyed by such failure.

The effect upon character-building of the great temptation to deceit and cheating, and the increase in number of the cases of corporal punishment, are not the least objections that may be raised. All must agree that their tendency is to develop and foster deceit, jealousy and selfishness on the part of the pupils; and dishonesty, scolding and irritability on the part of the teacher. How often the child is punished by the tired, overworked teacher, because of the dread that he may not be able to make a good showing in examination! Punished for not doing what perhaps he could not do, and, more than likely, what would be best undone!

The time spent is one-third more than is necessary to give as much useful knowledge and more educational training. This statement is made advisedly, for experience proves that often almost one-half of the time is spent in loading up for the examination. In fact, in some instances, all the time is spent in "stuffing" for finals. Some light on the subject is given in a late issue of the Illinois School Journal when it says: "The text-books are divided into so many lessons for each

month, and the monthly examination questions sent out by the superintendent adhere rigidly to the month's work. The pupils pass high, for they are practically drilled upon the answers to the questions during the month which were to be asked at the end of it, and credit is given for half-answers and quarter-answers, even to tenths. A number of county superintendents in Illinois, and if rumor may be credited, in some neighboring states, have improved upon this so far as to farm out the making of these questions to an outline vender, who furnishes the questions to the superintendent on condition that the superintendent will use his influence and authority in selling to the teachers the vender's outlines. This works well for both vender and superintendent. The one finds a profitable market for his wares, and the other is relieved of the necessity of knowing anything about the instruction given in the schools. The pupils pass high and the hoodwinked parents are pleased, while the intelligent and conscientious teacher protests—sotto voce. This is the iron rule of mechanism by which pupils are educated by the dozen, or by the company, or by the regiment, as conditions may determine."

But, perhaps the greatest objection to final examinations is because of their tendency to eliminate the personal element, and to make it impossible

to respect, to any degree, the individual capacity of the pupil. So long as they remain, so long will the serious charge, that "the public school machinery requires uniformity in every child," be well founded, if not unanswerable. So long will the grades be ironclad, as they endeavor to overcome not only the difference of temperament and home advantages, but even the difference in mental ability, which is predetermined. Remove this cause of the present system of grading, and you make it possible to grade the schools in accordance with the ability of the individual child, rather than according to the supposed "average ability of the school" of fifty or sixty! All must agree that fifty children can no more be held together in mental development than in physical growth! Why then must it be attempted? Have not the scholars been fitted to the schools long enough? Is it not time to adapt the grades to the scholars? That this is being understood is shown by the criticism of many leading journals.

If the above reasons are not satisfactory, it may be asserted, without fear of successful contradiction, that for the purpose of estimating the ability of the children or of determining their power to do the work of advanced grades, examinations are useless and superfluous. Every teacher worthy of

the name and place knows long before the examination what its result should be.

#### REMEDIES FOR THE EXAMINATION EVILS.

The following statements of Dr. E. E. White should have great weight with those who are seeking light on this problem, for he has made a careful study of this whole subject and is acknowledged to be one of the highest authorities on this and other pedagogical questions:

"For years past thoughtful superintendents and teachers have been earnestly devising plans to lessen the evils of the examination system, and, as a complete remedy for these evils, a few have seen their way clear to abolish the system itself.

"These efforts have taken different directions, the aim of one device being to relieve the 'terrible pressure of examinations;' of another, to free instruction and study from their grooving and mechanical influence; of a third, to prevent 'vicious cramming;' of a fourth, to remove occasions for dishonesty, and so on."

After discussing several methods, which have been tried in order to mitigate the acknowledged evils, he continues as follows: "These several expedients are remedies to cure the brood of ills born of the examination system. And this raises the practical question, Why not remove the cause of

these ills and thus obviate the necessity of their correction? Why not make the pupils' success in daily work the only factor in their promotion?" No one has studied this question more closely than has Dr. White. This is his conclusion. Is it not to be regretted that more have not acted in accordance with his wise suggestion? Does it not seem almost past belief that he was obliged to say that only "A few have seen their way clear to abolish the system itself?"

THE TEACHER'S ESTIMATE SHOULD DETERMINE  
PROMOTION.

The promotion examination having been abandoned, the teacher's estimate of the pupil's ability should determine his promotion. This estimate should be shown on monthly report cards, so that pupils and parents may know monthly what progress has been made. In the primary grades, the teacher's judgment should be sufficient. In the higher grades, the teacher's judgment should be made more certain by written tests. This will put a premium on the daily work and will furnish a moderate, but continuous stimulus rather than an excessive and spasmodic goad, as is the case with examinations. Tests given by the principal and superintendent should show the proper completion of work, and be used to direct and broaden the in-



struction, but should have nothing to do with promotion. Pupils promoted prematurely may be returned whence they came, and teachers will be more careful thereafter.

Some will say that the teaching test is but another name for the promotion examination, but a moment's thought will show that there is great difference between the two. The one is a careful diagnosis at frequent intervals for the purpose of discovering the disease in its incipency, that the proper remedies may be applied and the patient saved. The other is a blundering post-mortem, to determine the cause of death. Most of us would have no trouble in choosing between the two.

#### TOO MUCH POWER IN THE HANDS OF PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS.

Some superintendents say that this is putting too much power in the hands of the teachers and principals; but is not that just where it properly belongs? Should not both be free to work, as conscientious men and women, for the best interests of the children, rather than be compelled to continue to be mere cogs in the great machine run by the almighty superintendent? Who would not prefer to have his child's ability to pass to advanced work judged by the ever-present teacher, who had studied the child, rather than by the superintendent

who, of necessity, must be without knowledge of the individual? Many quotations might be given to prove that those who have had experience with this or a similar plan, agree that never before were promotions made so satisfactorily. That never before did teachers study the individuals so closely.

#### TIME AND FREQUENCY OF PROMOTION.

In what has been written, the word "promotion" has been used in its generally accepted sense, implying a change from one room to the next higher, and generally involving a change of teachers. For the best development of the pupils' mental, moral and physical powers, the teachers must know the individual characteristics and fully understand all the forces which influence their education, opportunities and character. Than this nothing is more important, though it requires time and careful study. For this and other reasons, it is the general conviction of educators that it is best for pupils to remain several months under the same teacher, if by so doing they are not compelled to work with those of different attainments and ability. Therefore, serious objections have been made to those plans of grading which provide for periodic promotions several times each year. Indeed, the objections have been so strongly presented that, though two or three cities have used this plan for many

years, it has not been adopted by others. Changing teachers several times each year not only interferes with progress in school work, but, what is infinitely more important, it has a blighting influence upon the developing characters.

The term, promotion, is also used to indicate the passage from any school work to more advanced work. This meaning of the word seems to be the better one; for a change from one room to a higher is no greater advancement than the passing from one division of a subject to the next higher part. In this sense of the word, there should be daily promotion, for each lesson should be a little advance over the preceding one. A pupil's advancement should be constant, and when any scholar cannot work with his classmates he should be reclassified and placed with those of about equal advancement. When the pupils of any class finish any portion of the work they should immediately advance to the next in order. All must acknowledge that any plan of grading which does not permit this, is not only unsatisfactory, but is criminally defective and unworthy of an enlightened age. The importance of permitting pupils to go forward when ready has been presented in previous chapters, but its absolute necessity cannot be represented too often nor too forcibly.

## Chapter X.

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### APPORTIONMENT OF WORK.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of our schools may be found in the method of apportioning the work. Indeed, it passes all power of comprehension to understand why, for hundreds of years, little or no provision has been made for the great differences known to exist in the ability of different classes, pupils and teachers.

An all-important feature of a rational plan of grading must be a provision that will enable each division of pupils to go just as fast as the teacher finds the pupils are able to accomplish the work as it should be done. No fixed amount of work should be demanded of any class within a given time. With but few, if any exceptions, all graded schools have the work so apportioned that a fixed amount of the course must be finished by the end of the term or year. This is a serious error. Without uniformity of conditions, it demands uniformity of results, and makes the time limit the same for all, no matter how widely the pupils, classes and teachers

differ. Is this not an unpardonable pedagogical sin? Is it not absolutely defenceless on any psychological grounds? In all frankness, does it not indicate the lack of the commonest kind of common sense? These seem to be harsh questions, but does not the occasion justify plain talk? Who will give any good reason for "nailing the course of study to the calendar"? Why should advancement to suitable work be determined by the time of year? Why should some pupils stop their work, though uncompleted, simply because others have finished it?

If one starts on a journey, he should not leave the train when the schedule says the time has arrived for him to reach the end of his journey; but he should leave the train when he arrives at his destination, whether that be after or before the time fixed by the one who made the schedule. The person who would insist upon having everyone leave the train at the time scheduled for its arriving at the destination, would soon reach the asylum where all such should be confined. Why then should Boards of Education, superintendents or others, who make the schedules for schools, expect teachers to drive pupils through the course of study at a certain fixed rate, in spite of many different determining factors?

## THE INJUSTICE OF THE USUAL METHOD NOW ACKNOWLEDGED.

At last some educators are beginning to realize the injustice of the usual method of apportioning the work. In speaking of this matter, a writer in the latest issue of the "Illinois School Journal" said:

"One of the strangest things in the history of educational practice is that it should have occurred to some mechanical genius that the work of a school curriculum could be divided into distinct sections, so that it would take just so many days, hours, minutes, and seconds to complete the work of each section; and that the pupils in a school could be grouped into classes corresponding to these sections, so that they would move forward at a uniform rate, separated by fixed intervals, in what has been appropriately called 'The lock-step of the graded school.'\* It is much more strange that this mechanical monstrosity should have found favor among teachers and people, and that it should have been indorsed by the almost universal practice of a generation. Unfortunately this chapter in modern educational history is not yet closed. There are still schools in which the work of each class for each day in each year of school life is as definitely prescribed as though fixed by the eternal decrees of

\*See author's article on this subject in "Atlantic Monthly," June, '97.

Fate. On the seventeenth day of his seventh year in school the boy's lesson in arithmetic will be that portion of Ray's Practical Arithmetic limited by pages 172 and 175. This is the doctrine of 'fore-ordination' carried to an absurd extreme!

"The fixed class interval is a crime against childhood, and when coupled with a scheme of promotions based upon a system of examinations, daily markings, and required percentages, it constitutes a fearful indictment of modern school practice. It makes little difference whether Superintendent Shearer or some other observer was the first to see this spot on the sun. It is large enough to be seen with even half an eye. It is possible that many have observed it and guarded themselves against its malign influence by some device or other. The size of the interval is not the worst thing about it, though the shorter the better. The worst feature lies in fixedness. You cannot keep the carriages in a funeral procession at fixed intervals. Divide any number of children into classes to-day, and they will not be properly divided to-morrow. Neither the members in a class nor the classes in a school can move forward at a uniform rate. Differences in the natural and acquired aptitude of pupils and in the skill of teachers, to say nothing of many other differences in condition, make this impossible. To insist upon it is to benumb the strong, to befud-

dle the weak, and to weaken all. If necessary, this outrageous custom must be attacked with sledge-hammer and dynamite, and destroyed."

In a late issue of "The Educational Review," Dr. Prince, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, speaks as follows upon this subject:

"There is no question of school organization at present more important than that of a proper adjustment of conditions to the needs of individual pupils. The assumption upon which most courses of study seem to be based, that just so much ground must be gone over with equal thoroughness by all pupils in the same time, is the greatest bane of our public school system. The courses in use are probably intended to meet the needs and capacity of pupils of average ability. Such, however, is the difference of ability between the brightest third and the dullest third of almost every class of pupils, that the work this requires is enfeebling to one part while it is discouraging or unduly excessive to the other. To neither group is there the stimulus of success with effort. To one group there is success without effort; to the other there is effort without success. The difficulty, it is feared, is enhanced by the want of ability or inclination on the part of many teachers to adapt each lesson's requirements to the capacity of individual members of the class.

"There are some signs of reaction against a sys-



## Chapter XI.

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### METHOD OF SECURING THOROUGHNESS IN ESSENTIALS.

#### DEVICES.

Years of experience in striving to work out and make practicable a more flexible plan of grading have developed certain devices which have proved of great value. In the following chapters several of these devices will be explained, in the hope and belief that they will be helpful to all who endeavor to follow any such plan as that which has been outlined in previous chapters. Some devices will appear of much greater importance than others, and each person will be led to make use of those which seem likely to be of greatest service in securing the desired ends. They are so simple that they can easily be made use of by anyone who feels the need of such. While their simplicity may lead some to doubt their efficiency, a careful trial will prove them to be far more useful than they at first appear.

## RECORD OF WORK DONE.

For the purpose of making sure that the work has been done satisfactorily, the "Record of Work Done" has proved of great service. Under the usual plan the pupils are all expected to be at a certain point by the time fixed; and whether or not the work has been done in a satisfactory manner is supposed to be determined by the examinations. Under the plan advocated, pupils are permitted to go just as far and as fast as they can finish the work to the satisfaction of the teacher. Therefore, classes will not reach any given point by a certain time, and they cannot be tested by uniform examinations at times arbitrarily determined. This peculiarity of the plan requires that some other method be used for making sure that the work has been done properly. Some device must be used which will enable the superintendent and principal to know just what work has been accomplished, and just how well the work has been done by each class.

With plenty of time at the disposal of the superintendent and principal, this important knowledge may best be gained by frequent visits for the purpose of carefully inspecting the work. However, there are many who are expected to know exactly what is being done, yet are kept so busy with other duties that they have but little time left for the work of supervision. For these, as well as for

others, the "Record of Work Done" will prove an excellent method of following the work more closely than would be possible without some similar device. This record should be made out by each teacher every two or three months, and should state briefly and concisely just what work has been finished to the satisfaction of the teacher during the time for which the record is made. This record should be sent to the principal for his approval. After being approved by the principal, the records sent by all the teachers should be entered in a book provided for that purpose. This book should be sent to the superintendent for his inspection, that he may know just what part of the course has been covered by each class. He should satisfy himself that no class has received credit for work which has not been done satisfactorily. By this means the principal can quickly discover any teacher who is disposed to pass too hurriedly over important parts of the work, and can have the work reviewed before injury results from its incomplete, unsatisfactory condition. He should also see that the same mistake is not made again by that teacher. The tests given by superintendent and principal should be used to show the proper completion of work; they should also be used to broaden the instruction and emphasize the important phases of the work which teachers may overlook: but they

should not be used as a basis for determining the promotion of pupils. As all tests will be only on what the teacher claims to have taught thoroughly, the very best results may reasonably be expected from them.

While it is not well to insist upon great thoroughness at every point, there are important parts in essential subjects upon which too much stress cannot well be laid. There are some things upon which future progress depends. These, at least, should be stamped indelibly upon the minds of the children. The failure to locate these important points, and drill upon them, has been the cause of the majority of failures on the part of those who have been passed to advanced work. Every teacher of experience knows that a large portion of his time is expended in trying to teach what should have been thoroughly taught before the pupils were admitted to his grade of work. When it is seen that the "Record of Work" may be so managed under this plan as to make it certain that only those who are prepared for advanced work are promoted, the importance of it becomes apparent to every teacher of experience.

To show more clearly the form of the "Record of Work," a few extracts are taken from the records made by teachers of different classes. Though the pupils were closely graded at the beginning of the

year, the record proves that, before they had been in school long, they naturally separated into groups which moved at different rates. A consideration of such records leads one to wonder that, for many years, teachers have been expected to take all over the same work in a given time. It will also show the great injustice to the pupils, and the still greater injustice to the teachers, many of whom have been condemned because they could not accomplish the task of making all the pupils of a class seem to cover the same amount of the course. That the pupils did not do so, is well known to all. How so many teachers were able to make it appear that they had done so, is not known by many who have not worked in the ranks. The terrible strain upon the teachers and pupils is appreciated only by those who have exhausted devices, patience and energy in unmercifully driving some and continually holding others back.

#### Records of First Year's Work.

"A Class—Reading: Eighty pages in Fundenberg's First Reader; one hundred and twenty-two in Swinton's First; one hundred and five pages in Lippincott's First Supplementary Reader. Total, about three hundred and fifty pages.

"B Division—Eighty pages in Fundenberg's First Reader; ninety-six pages in Swinton's First; forty

pages in Lippincott's. Total, two hundred and sixteen pages.

"C Division—Sixty-two pages in Fundenberg's First. Many of these pupils were out for a time with the measles. Others entered during the year. A few are naturally slow.

"D Division—Reading from blackboard and a few pages from Fundenberg. Most of the pupils in this class were either absent most of the year or entered but a short time before the end of the year. There are no really dull ones.

"There are from ten to fourteen in each division. Some have changed divisions during the year. Being permitted to allow pupils to go as fast as they were able has made teaching more of a pleasure than it has been at any time during the past twenty years.

"In Number Work the different divisions finished satisfactorily the combinations of numbers to ten, eight, and four."

#### Records of Another First Year.

"A Division—Reading: Three hundred and fifty-seven pages of different first readers.

"B Division—Two hundred and seventy-seven pages.

"C Division—One hundred and eighty-three pages.

"The pupils who were not able to keep up with the lowest division were sent to a lower class, which was opened in January. There were about twenty

changes from division to division, but they were made in such a way as to help rather than hinder my work.

"In Number Work A Division finished the combinations of numbers to twelve; the B Division to nine; and the C Division to six. There were twenty-two pupils in A; eleven in B; and eighteen in C."

#### Records of First Year's Work.

"A Division—Reading: Completed Appleton's Primer, Swinton's Primer, Finch Primer, Fundenberg's First Reader, and fifty pages of Ward's First Reader.

"B Division—Completed Appleton's Primer, thirty-five pages in Fundenberg, and twenty in Finch's Primer.

"C Division—Read from blackboard, and also about fifteen pages in Fundenberg's First Reader.

"Each division contains about fifteen. Advanced division was promoted to next grade before end of year. I had two additional divisions, but they merged into the three in a short time. Seventeen pupils gained from two to three months' time."

#### Record of Second Year's Work.

"A Division—Reading: Completed Alternate First, Normal Course First and McGuffey's Second.

"B Division—Parts of Alternate First Reader and McGuffey's Second.

"C Division—Parts of Franklin and Alternate First Readers.

"A Division—Arithmetic: Rapid addition of numbers as high as twenty. Addition, Subtraction, Notation and Numeration.

"B Division—Numbers to fifteen. Addition and Subtraction.

"Quite a number of the pupils were received from the lower classes. A Division contained thirty; the other divisions contained eight or ten each. Diphtheria kept many out of school and when they did return they were not permitted to work hard. Some had much trouble with their eyes, which were weak after pupils had had scarlet fever. Some should not have returned to school until they were stronger, but care was taken to place them where they would not be injured. Without being hurried, the pupils in this class have gained one hundred and fourteen months' time. Twenty-four have been promoted irregularly, involving a change of teacher. They have been benefited by sixty-three reclassifications, which involved a change in divisions, but no change of teacher. Changes were made only when teacher and principal found them necessary to keep pupils working with those of about equal ability."

Record from Seventh Year's Work.

"A Division—Arithmetic: Review of previous year's work. Percentage, Interest, Bank Discount, Duties, Customs, Taxes, Longitude and Time, Ratio and Proportion, Partnership and Square Root.



"B Division—Same as A Division, with the exception of the last four topics.

"C Division—Common and Decimal Fractions, Percentage, Interest, and Discount.

"A Division—Grammar: All parts of Speech excepting Participles, Analysis of simple, compound and complex sentences, and Composition Work.

"B Division—Same as above.

"C Division—Parts of speech, except verbs and participles. Word Analysis of simple sentences, and Composition Work.

"A and B Divisions—Geography: Completed the subject and reviewed.

"C Division—Completed the subject, but need a thorough review.

"During the past three years fourteen pupils have been promoted to advanced work between the times for regular promotions; these promotions involving a change of teachers. Those now in the class have had a total of sixty-four reclassifications within the same time, but not involving a change of teachers. Some have had four or five reclassifications in this time, while others have not had any, but have gone along regularly with their own division, passing to a new teacher at the beginning of each year. During the time those in the class have gained over twenty-six years, without any urging. The time gained by each pupil varies from twenty months to one month; and a few have taken the full time allotted for the completion of the work."

The above "Records of Work Done" have been taken at random from the Permanent Records sent to the superintendent's office. Two or three hundred others might be given, but those submitted will be sufficient to give a general idea of the character of the "Record of Work Done." Records similar to these are made for each subject, so that one can easily tell at a glance what work the teacher and principal believe to have been finished satisfactorily.

#### MANAGEMENT OF REVIEWS.

Most teachers realize the importance of frequent reviews, for the purpose of fixing the important knowledge in the minds of the children. That they are necessary for this is proved by the teachings of practice, common sense and psychology. All must acknowledge that reviews are beneficial, not only because they help the children to recall important facts, but also because they find the promised reviews strong incentives to more diligent work. Most efficient teachers find the reviews invaluable in determining what part of the instruction has been of benefit.

For the purpose of securing thoroughness in the essential work, some prefer the weekly reviews, while others believe that the desired end is best reached by making use of the monthly reviews.

Both of these may be used with good effect by the teacher. However, with this plan of grading, the monthly review has peculiar advantages. Though pupils pass to advanced work whenever ready for it, it has been found specially satisfactory to have the majority of the changes from teacher to teacher take place at the beginning of each school month, as at this time all the records of school and pupil are begun anew. By having a review of important parts of the essential subjects at the beginning of each month, pupils not quite up to the work of the next higher division, but ahead of their own class, can easily take a step forward at this time. As they enter at a time when there is a general review, it has been found that the new pupils are at once lost in the regular divisions, and the teacher finds little or no need of giving them special attention. This practically dove-tails the work of one division into that of the next higher, while the pupils, passing from a higher to a lower division, get the reviews greatly needed. The majority of the changes from teacher to teacher taking place at the same time also prevents crowding of any of the classes.

It would not be right to leave this subject without calling attention to the fact that too often the reviews are wrongfully used, simply for the purpose of testing for the memory of words and discon-

nected facts. Therefore care should be taken to emphasize, in the reviews, only the important facts, which are essential to the proper understanding of the subject. It should also be remembered that while they are valuable as a means of making sure of having the work done thoroughly, they are capable of performing a much higher and more important function. They may be so used that they will give to all a birds-eye view of each subject, that the important details will stand out boldly; they should bring all the important ideas of every subject into close association, so that every child may see the unity existing between the different ideas that make up each subject; and they should co-ordinate all the important facts so as to form one systematic whole.

## Chapter XII.

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### MEANS OF ENLISTING THE INTEREST OF PARENTS AND PUPILS.

The importance of securing the hearty co-operation of parents cannot be emphasized too strongly, nor considered too carefully by those planning for the improvement of the schools. While it is true that "the teacher makes the school," yet teachers are selected by the members of the Board of Education, who, in turn, are chosen by the people. The Board of Education is not likely to advance much faster than the sentiment of the community will warrant; therefore the importance of making sure of the interest of the people, from whom originates all authority necessary for the management of the schools. The public opinion of interested parents is a mighty engine for the up-building of the schools. Not to endeavor to awaken the sympathy and enlist the co-operation of the parents,

who largely mold and reflect public sentiment, is a serious mistake and the cause of many poor systems of schools. It is more than policy to make such endeavor: it is right; for the parents not only pay for the support of the schools, but they have intrusted to the schools their children, who are the dearest objects of their affections.

Many realize, in a vague way, the importance of having the interest of the parents; more find sufficient reason for trying to have the kind wishes of the members of the Board of Education; but too few appreciate the importance of having each pupil feel a deep interest in his own advancement and the advancement of the class. Without the lively interest of the children, the work will not be satisfactory. Then, too, as a means of enlisting the sympathy of the parents, the interest of the children is more potent than any other. Where the interest of the children is, the interest of parents is almost sure to be.

Many methods of enlisting the sympathy of parents and pupils have been suggested, and as many more will suggest themselves to thoughtful principals and teachers, only a few are mentioned, as being typical of devices which may properly be used for this purpose. Though the first is not peculiar to this plan of grading, it is given for the reason

that, with the others, years of experience have shown its great value.

#### MONTHLY REPORTS.

Some teachers think it too much trouble to send reports of any kind to the parents. Thus they save themselves some work and lose a hundred times more benefit, because of the lack of interest on the part of the parents and pupils. No one can be interested in that of which they know nothing. If the parents and pupils are not kept informed, we cannot reasonably expect them to be interested. Other teachers send daily or weekly reports, and thus make for themselves much unnecessary labor. Coming so frequently, these reports are not apt to receive the attention to which they are entitled. For many good reasons nearly all who give reports now send them out monthly. There are many kinds of reports which answer the purpose for which they are intended. A form of report, which has been especially potent in securing the interest of the parents, contains the following items of information: The grade of work which the pupil is pursuing; the divisions in which the pupil has been during the year; the character of the work done in every branch, in such a way that the latest report can easily be compared with the record for each preceding month; a general average for each month; number of cases of

tardiness; attendance for each month; mark in effort and deportment; explanation of the report; places for the signatures of principal, teacher and parents; such an address to the parent as will tend to emphasize the importance of making a careful study of the report and of giving the teacher every assistance possible.

The following is a copy of the address which has been used on the report card:

"To the Parent—The boys and the girls in the schools will be the men and women of the future, the immortals of eternity. Because of what they will be, the responsibility of parents and teacher is very great. The affections of the parents, naturally centering in the welfare of their children, lead to a desire that they, the objects of their dearest thoughts, may receive the best educational advantages possible.

"But no matter how earnestly and persistently the teacher tries to help the pupil, the best results will not be forthcoming unless there is the heartiest co-operation and warmest sympathy between parents, teachers and pupils.

"As it is impossible for you to visit the school frequently, this report is sent that you may know how your child is progressing in each study. It will enable you to see how the latest compares with all previous reports, and is intended to be a complete summary of all that pertains to your child's school life this year. Will you not please examine it care-



fully, sign it promptly and act upon the information given? You will thereby greatly help both your child and the teacher.

"Please aid in securing compliance with the rules of the school. This is not only necessary for the best interests of others, but ready obedience to proper authority is a lesson which every child should learn.

"Pupils should not only behave properly, but they should acquire the habit of being punctual, regular in attendance, studious, kind, courteous and neat. They should be taught to think of every action as a moral act, tending to form habits and indicating and determining moral character. For the sake of their present and future welfare, kindly help the teacher in all efforts to secure these and other desirable ends."

#### CERTIFICATE OF EXTRA PROMOTION.

Much encouragement has been given to pupils by a card showing that they had earned extra promotions. Movement forward is always acceptable to every person; and never more so than to pupils interested in their work and to parents solicitous for the advancement of their children. Without trying it, but few can appreciate the great interest aroused by the giving of such cards. As this plan of grading makes it easy for pupils to move forward at any time, the large majority of the pupils have received them, and the enthusiasm of parents and

pupils has been remarkable. The following is a copy of the Certificate of Extra Promotion:

"This is to certify that, because of the present plan of grading and promoting, .....  
 ..... has not only done the work required of the other pupils, but has also earned an extra promotion. The promotion was from .....  
 ..... to .....  
 .....Teacher."

On the reverse side the certificate reads as follows:

"To the Parent—Under the usual method of grading and promoting, your child would not have been promoted during the year, but would have had to mark time and wait until the other pupils were ready to move forward. The plan now used makes it possible for pupils to take up advanced work whenever ready for it. While great care should be taken to see to it that no pupil be allowed to go faster than he has the mental and physical ability to do the work thoroughly, many bright children have been ruined mentally and morally by being compelled to wait for those who either could not do the work or would not do it. Of the teacher and principal this plan requires close attention to each child, and from the superintendent extra, unappreciated work, worry and planning. For the pupils it means improved mental habits, increased interest and the saving of valuable time; and for most of them it means much more education that they would otherwise receive. I trust

that you will approve of this plan, and co-operate with us."

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#### CERTIFICATE OF TIME GAINED.

Another device, which has proved to be a source of great encouragement to pupils, is a small certificate showing the time gained by each pupil. It has also been a means of interesting the parents in all things pertaining to the schools. As, under this plan of grading, pupils are permitted to pass their classmates at any time when their advancement warrants it, many soon find themselves far ahead of those with whom they would have had to remain if it had not been for this provision for reclassification. As most courses of study do not contain more than sufficient work to keep the slower pupils busy, a large proportion of the pupils of every school would receive these certificates. No less than ninety per cent of the pupils, who have had the opportunity of working under this plan for three years, have received these rewards of merit. By the records kept, it is easy to tell just how far a pupil is ahead of former companions. Once each year this record is made out and sent to parents. The following is a copy of the certificate used:

"This is to certify that since the present plan of grading and promoting was introduced, . . . . .

has gained ..... months and is that far ahead of former classmates.

.....Teacher.”

The address to the parent is as follows:

“To the Parent—The pupils of every grade differ widely in age, in acquirements, in aptitude, in mental and physical strength, in home advantages, in the time of entering school, in regularity of attendance, and in many other ways affecting their progress. Because of these differences many pupils can easily finish a given amount of work in one-half to two-thirds the time it takes others to do the same work. Regardless of this indisputable fact, the schools all over this country bind together the bright and the slow, and by holding back the bright, and unmercifully driving the slower ones, force all to move at the same pace, not only month after month, but year after year, for their whole school lives. Believing that this is an outrage upon both the bright and the slow, the present plan was put in operation that pupils might be able to go just as fast as they should, and no faster.

“All friends of our schools will be gratified to know that the papers of nearly all the large cities of this country, from San Francisco to Boston, have commended this plan which is in operation in our schools.

“Because of this plan of grading your child has been able to gain time without being hurried. Time which would have been worse than wasted has been used to good purpose, and without being

urged, and almost without knowing it, your child has gone faster than others. Is this not right? If you believe it is, we most earnestly ask your friendly aid, that your child may receive even more benefit in the future, when greater advantages will result from this plan.

“We hope that you will take a personal interest in the public schools, and aid us in securing for our boys and girls as good an education as it is possible for them to get.”

That this plan does increase the interest of the parents has been conclusively proved in many ways. That this is recognized by those in the schools is shown by many expressions similar to the following, which is an extract from a letter written by a principal after three years' experience with the method. “It has given pupils a fresh incentive for work, the reward being their own personal progress. The number of graduates from our school this year is more than double that of three years ago, while the interest and support of the parents have increased in about the same ratio.”

Many teachers complain of the lack of interest upon the part of the parents. All know that, too often, parents manifest no interest, save when they come to complain. May it not be because teachers have not done their part? With such devices as the above, it has been very encouraging to see with

what zeal nearly all parents co-operate when they find their interest is desired and appreciated. Quite as gratifying is the beneficial effect upon the children.

## Chapter XIII.

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### LOCATION AND REMOVAL OF DANGER POINTS IN EACH GRADE.

In a more or less vague way, every teacher of experience knows that, in each year's work, but few subjects are especially hard for the pupils to master. Teachers generally agree that if pupils entering each class were only well prepared in the few important parts of the essential subjects of the preceding grades, the task of taking the pupils over the required ground would be comparatively easy. Coming, as so many pupils do, with a meagre understanding of the knowledge upon which they are supposed to build, the majority of teachers find it absolutely necessary to spend a large part of the time trying to patch up the poorly laid foundations, preparatory to attempting to build thereon. Sometimes the mistakes are not discovered until later, when an effort is generally made to strengthen the weakest points. Many times the pupils are so utterly deficient in the most important principles,

that teachers, in despair, endeavor to remove what has been taught, that they may rebuild even from the base course itself. Many more times the pupils are permitted to attempt to build upon the sand; the educational superstructure falls when put to the test; pupils are overwhelmed by the disgrace of failure, and discouraged because they know it comes in spite of earnest effort upon their part; therefore, convinced that it is useless for them to attempt to rebuild, they stop trying; whereas, if they had had a proper foundation, they would have built a noble temple of knowledge. All their lives they suffer because of a lack of what they might easily have secured.

Though nearly all of the failures are caused by want of preparation at comparatively few points, yet, so far as is known, there has never been an attempt made to locate these subjects, and parts of subjects, which cause the majority of failures in each grade. If possible, even less has been done to point out the danger points in each subject.

This chapter is written for the purpose of calling attention to this very important matter, and for the purpose of suggesting a few points to which it will be well to give special consideration. Attention having been called to the matter, each teacher and principal will be able to locate additional points of



difficulty in their own courses of study, better than they can be pointed out to them by others.

The conclusions, as to which are the most difficult subjects, were not reached without having sufficient data on which to base the inferences. To determine the subjects which give the most trouble to teachers and pupils, the records made by between fifteen and twenty thousand pupils, of different grades, were studied carefully. To discover the points where the most trouble arises, many teachers of every grade were consulted. In spite of this fact, every principal and teacher should make confirmatory tests and be on the lookout for other danger points in each subject. When they have once been discovered, the teachers will easily remove them by giving them special attention and by following the individuals closely at these points. In the hope that they will be helpful to inexperienced teachers, a few suggestions are given as to methods of helping pupils over some of these troublesome places.

#### FIRST YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

Danger Points: Hardest combinations from one to ten. Abstract combinations. Writing and reading numbers that look or sound alike. Development of clear ideas of numbers. Use of the signs.

Suggestions: Concrete and abstract problems by teacher and pupil. Pupils in this grade require repeated drill in every step from the formation of figures to the combinations of numbers.

#### Reading.

Danger Points: Combinations of sounds. Recognition of words in script and print; especially those similar in appearance as: this, that, these, there, etc. Ability to recognize new words.

Suggestions: Phonic drill. Practice on columns of words. Special attention to articulation and expression. Give the pupil time to read the sentence to himself, in order that he may get the thought. From the beginning make an effort to secure expression in reading.

#### SECOND YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

Danger Points: Difficulty is found in applying combinations and recognizing the same combinations, no matter in what form they appear. Notation and numeration. Work in parts of wholes and relation of one to the other. In subtraction, borrowing and paying back.

Suggestions: Give pupils examples and questions in every conceivable way, so that they may become familiar with the form and number, and be able to recognize it under all conditions. Drill at the board by mental work, and by cards containing combinations with or without answers. Oral examples and explanatory board work is the best way

to make borrowing and paying back, in subtraction, understood.

### Reading.

**Danger Points:** Ability of pupil to read understandingly and with expression. Recognition of similar words. Joining the article to the noun. Combinations of sounds and letters, and clear enunciation should have attention. Sounds of letters. Recognition of words at sight.

**Suggestions:** Be careful about words that look much alike, as, how, who, then, them, this, the, etc. Drill is very important here. Write the words in columns on the board, and let each child read one or more words. Give them for spelling lessons, and dictate them to pupils for writing. Expression may be secured by questions, comparisons, suggestions, informal talks and use of objects and pictures. Enunciation is aided by drill in phonics. Have children read silently one line, or to a period, before reading audibly. Have the most difficult phrases written on the board and read by class till difficulty is removed. The hard words should be spelled by sound before lesson is read. Have the best reader read the difficult passage, so that expression is noticed, which latter is also aided by "talking it" and by asking questions.

### THIRD YEAR.

#### Arithmetic.

**Danger Points:** Second step in subtraction. Rapid work. The sevens, eights and nines in mul-

tiplication. The use of the cipher in subtraction and multiplication. Division where naughts occur in quotient. Relative size and value of numbers; children not seeing readily that 2000 cannot be subtracted from 1989. Notation and numeration.

Suggestions: Board work. Rapid addition. Dictation. Drill in subtraction and multiplication tables. Place figures on board, using each in turn as multiplier. Individual work at board. Many examples using cipher.

#### Reading.

Danger Points: To read readily at sight. Expression. Articulation, particularly final consonants. Difficulty in recognizing words similar in form, as though, through, thought, thorough.

Suggestions: To enable children to recognize words easily, take the difficult words in the lesson and write them on the board, and have pupils read them. Also teach the equivalent sounds of letters; divide words into syllables, teach formation of derivatives from primitives, and compound from simple words. For articulation, drill on the oral elements. Give much practice on words.

#### FOURTH YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

Danger Points: In long division, subtracting from dividend and comparing remainder with divisor. The cipher in multiplication and subtraction. Rapid addition. Few hardest of the forty-five combinations. In subtraction, the alternate

borrowing, and use of ciphers in minuend. Dollar sign and point in United States money. Notation of number where ciphers are needed. Thoroughness in fundamental rules.

Suggestions: Constant drill on hard parts. Require pupils to add columns of figures; beginning with short columns with small figures. Gradually increase till they become ready and rapid in computation. Give little problems that require thought. Require quick mental work on line, having pupils pass above and below each other.

Reading.

Danger Points: Articulation and expression. Pronunciation of final consonants. Clear tones and easy recognition of the words. Good understanding of the thought.

Suggestions: Children having defects in articulation should be shown the proper position of the vocal cords. To aid expression, one pupil should be selected each day to read the lesson to the whole class. Teacher may call for difficult words and write them on the board. Pupils may compose sentences containing them. Three or four easy readers should be used, rather than to hurry pupils to difficult words.

Language.

Danger Points: Dictated sentences, letter writing. Use of new words in original sentences. Use of Period. The dot over "i" and "j." "I" as a capital. Avoidance of "and" in reproduction stories. Possessive forms. Use of capitals at beginning of sentences.

**Suggestions:** Give sentences in which a child can easily grasp the thought. Don't make him write words that mean nothing to him. Try to make letter-writing interesting and easy. Require pupils to form sentences orally, using the following analysis: "I first think about something; I use words to express my thoughts; as 'The tree grows.' These words express a thought and it is called a sentence." Dictate sentences daily, correct the papers and return, having pupils rewrite correctly. Read a story to the class, and have pupils bring in the reproduction from memory. Correct, as far as sensible, the frequent errors of speech.

#### FIFTH YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

**Danger Points:** Division and multiplication of fractions. Reduction of answers. Special attention to subtraction when fraction below exceeds that above. Long division, when ciphers occur in the quotient, and multiplication, when ciphers occur in multiplier. Finding trial divisor in long division. Reduction, ascending in denominate numbers. In division of decimals, trouble with pointing off the correct number of decimal places in the quotient. Decimal point very often forgotten. Special attention given to subject of mixed numbers when it is necessary to borrow from whole number.

**Suggestions:** Decimal point best developed by dictating all examples, and by constant drill work. In subtraction of fractions, first reduce to improper fractions, then, after making the denominators com-

mon, and subtracting the numerators, reduce to mixed numbers, if necessary. Constant drill and review secure improvement. All mistakes should be corrected by the pupils, if possible, and rewritten. Thorough explanation of principles and methods. Much practice.

#### Grammar.

**Danger Points:** Ability to write and speak in clear, simple and correct English. To recognize the parts of speech. Use of is and are, was and were, etc. Use of quotation marks. Punctuation and use of capitals. Proper use of imperfect tense of such verbs as saw, did, etc. Formation of singular and plural possessives. Abstract nouns.

**Suggestions:** In order to distinguish parts of speech, let pupils select parts of speech in the reading lesson. Drill on words pronounced alike, but spelled differently. Try to avoid having pupils spoil simple intelligent language by an attempt to use set rules and grammatical terms. All written work should be preceded by oral work. Special attention given to errors.

#### SIXTH YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

**Danger Points:** Division of fractions. Correct use of the decimal point. Multiplication and division of compound numbers. Rapidity in notation and numeration of decimals. Reduction of decimals to common fractions.

**Suggestions:** Drill at the board on dictated

work. Constant practice in numbers in which ciphers appear. Daily drill on some one weak point of class, giving one example, if no more time can be taken from class work. Explanation of errors. Varying examples, using the same principle. Simple examples made by class and teacher.

Grammar.

Danger Points: To teach children to express themselves accurately and clearly. Cases of pronouns. Complex sentences. Forming possessive case of nouns properly. Paragraphing. Good expression in original work.

Suggestions: Drill on fewer points. Have much oral work.

#### SEVENTH YEAR.

Arithmetic.

Danger Points: Finding base, rate, and percentage. Use of decimal point. Division of decimals. Accurate work in common and decimal fractions. Accuracy in fundamental rules.

Suggestions: Constant drills at danger points. Mistakes pointed out, and the errors corrected by the pupil. Have pupils criticise their own work and work of other members of the class. Drill on that part of review work where pupils are most deficient.

Grammar.

Danger Points: Conjugation of verbs. Construction of simple sentences. Formation of plurals and possessives.



Suggestions: Use of word in reader. Teach each case separately and drill. Have pupils construct sentences. Lesson on blackboard. Have conversation lessons to help in language. Have pupils criticise their own work and the work of the class. Drill in finding object and attribute. More attention to building of simple sentences.

#### EIGHTH YEAR.

##### Arithmetic.

Danger Points: Practical work in common fractions and percentage. Accuracy and ability to work more readily with common and decimal fractions. Accuracy in four fundamental rules. Finding interest at any other rate than six per cent. Fractional and decimal parts of denominate numbers.

Suggestions: Subject to be thoroughly explained. Much blackboard work. Let pupils explain their work. Have pupils draw figures in mensuration. Continued practice to keep pupils proficient. Oral work. Thorough review of all important parts passed over, giving special attention to danger points in each case.

##### Grammar.

Danger Points: Producing clear and well-formed sentences. Parsing. Construction of sentences. Participle and verb. Case of pronouns. Irregular verbs. Possessive case. Lack of fluency.

Suggestions: Original compositions. Change compound sentences to complex. Drill in making sentences throughout the year.

## Chapter XIV.

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### NUMBER OF DIVISIONS AND BASIS OF CLASSIFICATION IN EACH GRADE.

Having fixed upon the essential subjects and the danger points in each grade, the question as to the number of divisions becomes an important one. Great care must be taken to make the divisions needed, and, at the same time, to have no more than a teacher can handle satisfactorily. At no time should there be more divisions than are required to meet the needs of the pupils and the demands of proper instruction. Extra divisions should be made when necessary, and should not be continued longer than they are needed. The greatest care must be taken with the sequential subjects—those in which future progress is dependent upon what has been learned.

For a time there were many who advocated a separate classification for each subject. This had

the advantage of an exact adaptation of studies to the wishes of the pupils, if the teacher was able to make the division; yet, where tried, it did not prove satisfactory. Not only did it cause a great waste of time, but it encouraged the giving of special attention to particular subjects; though all agreed that the end desired was a well-rounded cultivation.

The great difficulty in properly managing the manifold classification soon led most to favor a three-fold division, based upon reading, arithmetic and mechanical subjects. It was found unnecessary to retain the last, so that the only separate classification was made with reading and arithmetic as the basis. The necessity of having all pupils of each grade reach a given level, in all subjects, by a certain time, has now led to the universal adoption of the single basis of classification. This was done that pupils might make the same progress in all subjects of the grade. The principal advantages of this method lie in its simplicity and its prevention of a one-sided development.

Under the plan of grading herein explained pupils may be placed in different divisions temporarily; but before the end of the term it has been found best to have all in one or other of the divisions, in all of the essential or promotion subjects. In hundreds of cases, when pupils were disposed to

neglect certain work which was distasteful to them, they have shown great energy in doing what they thought they could not do; until it was discovered that their remaining in advanced divisions in their favorite subjects was dependent upon the accomplishment of certain work in other lessons.

The number of divisions in each grade will be largely determined by the number of pupils in the grade. In a school having two grades to a class, the pupils cannot be as accurately classified as in those schools having one or more classes of about the same grade. In short, it may be said, that, other things being equal, the larger the number of pupils attending any school the easier it will be to secure an accurate classification of pupils.

Where there are two or more grades in each room, the only practical method is to divide them into three or four divisions in each of the most important subjects. In buildings having two or more rooms of the same grade, sufficiently accurate classification may often be secured by having but two or three divisions in each of the essential subjects. However, it should be remembered that teachers who have heretofore had but one class will naturally be strongly in favor of having as few divisions as they are permitted to have.

teachers have found it best to give great weight to reading as a basis of classification in the first year. However, by the time for promotion, it will generally be best to have each pupil in the same division in both subjects. Divisions for the purpose of recitation may be made as the teacher thinks advisable.

Second Year. Three divisions in number work, and three in reading. These will generally be found sufficient, though additional divisions should be made when necessary to the accurate grading of the pupils in these branches. Many teachers favor more divisions, but experience proves that, except in special cases, more are not needed. In other subjects divisions may be made for the purpose of recitation.

Third Year. Three divisions in arithmetic, and three in reading, and two divisions in language. Divisions in other subjects should be made for the purpose of recitation, but not necessarily on ability, as in more important branches.

Fourth Year. Three divisions in arithmetic and two or three in reading. It may be satisfactory to have all read about the same lessons, but for the purpose of recitation there should be two classes. There should also be two divisions in language work. Many teachers prefer to divide in other branches, that they may have smaller classes to instruct and test orally.

**Fifth Year.** Three divisions in arithmetic and two in language and geography. The divisions in geography may do about the same work, but they should recite separately. Thus explanations and instruction may be given to all at the same time.

**Sixth Year.** Two or three divisions in arithmetic, and two divisions in language, grammar and geography. In grammar and geography both divisions may generally take the same instruction and the same lessons, but the class should be divided for the purpose of recitation. Some teachers have found it beneficial to divide in history, for the purpose of having smaller classes.

**Seventh Year.** Two or three divisions in arithmetic and two divisions in grammar, history and geography. Division in geography and history may be for purpose of recitation.

**Eighth Year.** Same as in preceding year.

In all subjects where division is urged, the division should be upon the basis of ability. In those subjects where division is optional, the division may be made arbitrarily, without regard to the advancement and ability of the pupils.

Some very good educators believe that pupils should be divided according to ability in all subjects, and advance equally in all; but experience

has proved the value of giving special attention to the more important branches.

The fact that nearly all of the failures are in one or two of the important subjects of each grade, leads to the belief that more care should be given to these subjects. When examined closely, it will be found that there are but a few danger points in each. For this reason, this plan of grading provides for instruction by divisions in these subjects, in order that the teacher may come into close contact with each pupil and have certain knowledge of what each knows of every important subject. It also provides for individual testing and individual instruction at those places which experience proves to be the most difficult parts for the pupils to understand.

By group and individual teaching and testing, the teacher comes into close contact with the children and thus learns many things concerning them which otherwise would never be discovered. Marked differences in ability to grasp subjects; the differing periods at which the faculties begin to act with considerable power; the kind of instruction best suited to peculiar characters and temperaments; the effects of study on the health; the mental, moral and physical deficiencies and superiorities; the home environments, determining the kind

of work which may be reasonably expected from each: These and many other important facts the teacher may best learn by following the pupils in the small divisions and as individuals.



## Chapter XV.

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### PROGRAMS FOR EACH GRADE.

All must acknowledge that one of the primary requisites of a successful school management is a good program, for without it the work would be chaotic. No teacher can possibly do efficient work unless she works under a well considered and carefully arranged program. Such a program will not only make teachers and pupils systematic, but it will save much time and make all school work more effective. As a means of securing satisfactory results, it is invaluable. It is also of great moral value, because of its potent influence in developing habits of order, regularity and attention to the work in hand.

Thoughtful educators agree that the ability to make a good program is a fair criterion by which the success of an experienced teacher may be judged. Nowhere is there offered a better opportunity for the display of a knowledge of the fundamental principles of education. Upon many points

there will always be room for a difference of opinion; however, the following suggestions will be accepted by most as correct in principle. The program should provide a place for all regular school work, and no study should receive more than its share of time and attention. A definite time should be indicated for the preparation of most of the lessons in school, under the direction of the teacher. Studies requiring most mental effort should come in the morning and at other times when the mind is most active. Studies employing different faculties should follow each other, for here, as elsewhere, "a change of labor is rest." Writing and drawing should follow book study, but never physical exercise of any kind. Physical exercise, work at board, and other school work involving change of position, should follow lessons permitting but little movement. All through the program there should be a pleasing variety. Recitations should be short and classes small, instead of the opposite. In the primary grades the recitations should be short and frequent. As pupils get older the length may be increased and the frequency decreased.

#### SILENT WORK.

So much valuable time is wasted in so-called "busy work" that it seems important to emphasize the importance of proper silent work.

A large portion of the time in school cannot be spent in the recitation. It is best that it should be so, for, except in the highest grades, nearly all of the preparation for recitation should be made in school. Home work and silent work, for all grades, should be for the purpose of fixing firmly in the mind the truths brought out in the recitation, or for the purpose of preparing for the recitation by means of suitable tasks. The planning for this silent seat work is one of the most important parts of every teacher's work. No one thing is more vital to successful management and discipline. Left alone, the pupils will not only keep busy, but they will also keep the teacher more than busy. But they must be kept busy upon such silent work as will either prepare them for the recitation or supplement it. To do this demands careful planning, but it is one of the most important parts of a teacher's preparation. The failure to realize this is one of the most potent causes of the downfall of the majority of those not succeeding. While the careful planning of the seat work is of so great importance in every school, it is especially so with this plan of grading, under which much time in school is given for the preparation of lessons.

No program can be made to suit all conditions. Therefore, no teacher should force any school to fit a given program; but the effort should be made to

make a program which will meet the conditions existing. However, to give a general idea of the method of managing the divisions under this plan of grading, a partial program is given for the different grades. Generally only that part of the program is given which is a requirement of this plan of grading, for the reason that it is believed to be best not to interfere with the teacher more than is necessary to meet the demands of the plan.

Some teachers of the primary grades prefer to have reading before the arithmetic; but after much hesitation arithmetic has been placed first, for the reason that experience has proved this arrangement most satisfactory. The having of certain important branches at about the same time in all grades makes it easy for pupils who are not quite up to the lowest division of the higher grade to recite with the highest division of their own class, and also the lowest division of the next higher grade, without losing a recitation in any other lesson. It makes it possible to dovetail the work of one grade into that of another, so that pupils may easily pass from one class to another without omitting any important work.

It is also an important help to have the lower divisions listen while the next higher division is receiving instruction. When pupils are but a short distance behind others, it is wonderful how much

they will learn from following closely the recitations. Some who have worked in the ungraded school realize this in a vague way, but none who have not tried this or a similar method will be able to even faintly appreciate the ease with which children learn from other children. Care should be taken to see that pupils are following closely, and when the work is such that they cannot be benefited by attending to the recitation they should be given other work.

Each session one period is saved for the purpose of giving attention to the special needs of individual pupils. This is very important. It will not do to say that much of the teacher's work is given to helping the individual, and, therefore, this is unnecessary. At this time the teacher should answer questions which arise in the work, and endeavor to help each pupil who needs assistance. This time should also be made use of to see to it that every pupil fully understands the perplexing parts of the work already covered. There are but few of these points in each grade, and by a proper use of this special period no teacher need be ignorant of what the pupils really know about the work at the danger points.

#### PROGRAM FOR FIRST YEAR.

Perhaps the hardest program to arrange satisfactorily is that for the first year, as pupils are so

young that it is difficult to keep them busy without the constant supervision of the teacher. The following program is given as suggestive to those who are working in this grade.

#### MORNING.

First Period. Opening exercises, memory gems, morals and manners, for all divisions.

Second Period. A Division—Arithmetic. B Division—Attention to those reciting, if they can be benefited; if not, they may be given slate work. C Division—Busy work.

Third Period. Calisthenics for all.

Fourth Period. A Division—Written work. B Division—Arithmetic. C Division—Attention to division reciting, or varied slate work.

Fifth Period. Writing for all, or recess.

Sixth Period. Drill in phonics or other work preparatory for reading for all.

Seventh Period. A Division—Reading. B Division—Attention to class reciting. C Division—Writing numbers.

Eighth Period. A Division—Writing new words in advanced lesson. B Division—Reading. C Division—Attention to division reciting, or busy work.

Ninth Period. Marching or calisthenics for all.

Tenth Period. A Division—Same as last period. B Division—Writing of words in advanced lesson. C Division—Reading.

Eleventh Period. All busy with slate work, that the teacher's entire attention may be given to individual needs.

AFTERNOON.

First Period. A Division—Reading. B Division—Attention to recitation, or slate work. C Division—Same.

Second Period. A Division—Slate work. B Division—Reading. C Division—Attention to recitation or busy work.

Third Period. Marching or calisthenics for all.

Fourth Period. A Division—Same as last, busy work, or writing new words. B Division—Writing words of new lesson. C Division—Reading.

Fifth Period. Silent work of some kind for all, that the teacher may be free to give attention to any needing special help. This will give an opportunity to pupils to ask questions, without interrupting during recitations.

Many will at once say that it is not possible to have so many recitation periods each day; but such are mistaken. With recitation periods about fifteen minutes in length, the above takes but two hours for the two most important subjects, and leaves three hours for the less important branches, and for additional divisions wherever needed. As few teachers will have any trouble in placing other subjects, it is not thought necessary to mention them.

## PROGRAM FOR SECOND YEAR.

## MORNING.

First Period. Opening exercises, memory gems, morals and manners, for all divisions.

Second Period. Easy mental problems for all.

Third Period. A Division—Arithmetic. B Division—Attention to recitation or written work in arithmetic. C Division—Writing names and figures.

Fourth Period. A Division—Written work in arithmetic. B Division—Arithmetic. C Division—Attention to division reciting, or silent work.

Fifth Period. A Division—Same as last period. B Division—Written work in arithmetic. C Division—Arithmetic.

Sixth Period. Calisthenics for all.

Seventh Period. All busy with silent work, that the teacher may give entire attention to helping individuals. Pupils who have questions to ask concerning any part of the work may well ask them at this time, when they will not interrupt recitation.

Eighth Period. Recess.

Ninth Period. A Division—Reading. B Division—Attention to recitation or study reading. C Division—Written work from board.

Tenth Period. A Division—Writing words of new lesson in reading, or written work from the board. B Division—Reading. C Division—Attention to the recitation or study reading.

Eleventh Period. A Division—Study reading,



write new words, or Roman numbers. B Division—Same. C Division—Reading.

#### AFTERNOON.

First Period. Easy supplementary reading for all divisions, if possible. C Division may follow others and learn what they can.

Second Period. A Division—Language. B Division—Same. C Division—Attention to recitation or silent work.

Third Period. A Division—Silent work. B Division—Same. C Division—Language.

Fourth Period. All busy with silent work of some kind, that teacher may attend to needs of individuals and see that difficult points in lessons are comprehended by all.

With recitations from fifteen to twenty minutes in length, about two hours will be used for arithmetic and reading. The remaining three hours may be used for an extra division, wherever needed, and for the other branches.

#### PROGRAM FOR THIRD YEAR.

The program in this grade may be about the same as in the second year, though the pupils can do much more silent work. They may also be graded a little more closely in language, if this branch is taken separately. With recitations about twenty minutes in length, this will still leave almost three hours for the less important branches.

Pupils should be followed very closely in this grade, to see that each one is thorough in the essential parts of the work. If the time can be spared, it will prove beneficial to make the periods for individual instruction longer. If pupils fall behind those in the lowest division in arithmetic or reading, they should be placed in separate divisions until they are able to work with one of the regular divisions. It will often be found advantageous to have pupils recite with the lowest division when that division is reviewing the portion of the work in which they are deficient. This they may easily do and still retain membership in their regular division.

#### PROGRAM FOR FOURTH YEAR.

##### MORNING.

First Period. Opening exercises as in preceding grades.

Second Period. A Division—Arithmetic. B Division—Attention to recitation or preparation of lesson in arithmetic. C Division—Prepare lesson in arithmetic.

Third Period. A Division—Work in arithmetic. B Division—Recite arithmetic. C Division—Attention to recitation or same as last period.

Fourth Period. Calisthenics for all.

Fifth Period. A Division—Study reading. B Division—Same. C Division—Recite Arithmetic.

Sixth Period. Recess.

Seventh Period. A Division—Recite reading.  
B Division—Same, if the two divisions do not make too large a class. C Division—Study reading or give attention to recitation.

Eighth Period. A Division—Study language.  
B Division—Same. C Division—Recite reading.

Ninth Period. Silent work for all, that teacher may give assistance to individuals needing help in any subject.

#### AFTERNOON.

First Period. A Division—Recite language.  
B Division—Same. C Division—Study.

Second Period. A Division—Study. B Division—Same. C Division—Recite language.

Third Period. Study of geography by all, under direction of teacher.

With the exception of the subjects mentioned, it will not generally be found necessary to have pupils in this grade separated into small divisions. However, many teachers prefer to divide in most of the subjects for the purpose of recitation.

#### PROGRAM FOR FIFTH YEAR.

##### MORNING.

First Period. Opening exercises.

Second Period. A Division—Recite arithmetic.  
Other divisions study.

Third Period. B Division—Recite arithmetic.  
Other divisions study.

Fourth Period. C Division—Recite arithmetic. Other divisions study.

Fifth Period. All busy with assigned work, that teacher may give aid to those needing help at particular points.

Sixth Period. Recess.

Seventh Period. A Division—Recite language. B Division—Study.

Eighth Period. B Division—Recite language. A Division—Study.

The rest of the program may be arranged as thought best. There should be two divisions in geography. Pupils may generally work together in other branches of this grade. With recitations about twenty minutes in length, plenty of time will be left for other subjects.

#### PROGRAMS FOR SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH YEARS.

##### MORNING.

First Period. Opening exercises.

Second Period. A Division—Arithmetic. B Division—Study.

Third Period. A Division—Study. B Division—Arithmetic.

Fourth Period. Some restful exercise.

Fifth Period. Study of such character as will keep all busy, that teacher may devote entire attention to assisting individuals.

Sixth Period. Recess.

Seventh Period. A Division—Recite language or grammar. B Division—Study.

Eighth Period. A Division—Study. B Division—Recite language or grammar.

The rest of the program may be arranged as seems best. It will generally be found best to have the class divided in geography and history. Sometimes the division may receive explanations at the same time, if they are working in the same part of the subject; but even in this case better results will be secured by having each division recite separately. Recitations may be about twenty-five minutes in length.

## Chapter XVI.

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### MEANS OF REACHING THE INDIVIDUAL AND HELPING THE FUTURE TEACHERS.

The importance of following closely the individual pupil has already been emphasized, and attention has been called to the fact that no plan will answer the demands of the present age, unless it conserves the interests of the individual without interfering with the rights of the majority.

It should be remembered that a satisfactory method of grading must secure the principal advantages of individual teaching and yet retain the many benefits of class instruction. While providing suitable work for the class, it must also make it easy for the pupils to pass from one class to another, so that the work at all times may be fitted to the rate of progress, stage of development, and character of attainments of each individual. How, under this method, this much desired end may be appreciably approached, if not fully attained, may

have already appeared to the thoughtful reader. However, to obviate the necessity of re-reading, several means which this plan offers of getting closer to the individuals are mentioned. It is hoped that they will make plain the fact that reaching the individual is not only very important, but is also quite feasible.

#### REACHING THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE CLASS.

As the pupils under each teacher are accurately classified according to their abilities and their attainments, it follows that in the less important subjects the instruction given to all will be suited to each individual. Therefore, this will enable the teacher to make the instruction beneficial to every pupil in the class. This the teacher cannot do as schools are generally graded, for in almost every school there are many who cannot be benefited by much of the instruction.

Even in the less important subjects the pupils are often divided into groups for the purpose of oral testing, so that thus each is met by searching questions upon the important parts of the subject.

#### REACHING THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE GROUP.

In the more important branches the pupils are divided into small groups for the purpose of instruction, drill, and testing. Here, in the smaller divisions, the teacher comes into closer contact with

each pupil, so that there is no possibility of the unprepared pupil escaping.

The pupil can neither rely upon being passed by nor upon learning the lesson by hearing many others recite. Every pupil knows that unless prepared it is not safe to go to the recitation. Being very accurately classified, the instruction may be exactly suited to each, though given to all. The drilling and the testing can be directed to the specific ends which the certain knowledge of the pupils' proficiency makes desirable. With such close classification, each question asked by the teacher and each answer given by the pupil is of value to all pupils in the group.

#### REACHING THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE STUDY PERIOD.

Under this plan two periods each day are reserved for the specific purpose of giving close attention to the needs of individuals. Thus the teacher comes into still closer contact with each, and discovers individual peculiarities, deficiencies and superiorities. These reserve periods are not only of great value to the pupils, but they are also of great benefit to the teacher, and may be used for the purpose of answering questions and helping individuals, instead of being frequently interrupted for these purposes during the recitations.



## REACHING THE INDIVIDUAL BY MEANS OF THE RECORD.

Another valuable means of insuring a careful consideration and thorough knowledge of each individual is the record which each teacher is required to keep. This record shows the following facts for each pupil: The age; the record made in every subject; the effort; the deportment; the tardiness; the days present; the exact portion of work done satisfactorily; the time lost or gained; the number of extra promotions and reclassifications; the time spent in each grade; the record of work in each division; the mental, moral or physical peculiarities of each, which may be of value in properly estimating the character and the amount of work which may reasonably be expected of each pupil; and suggestions as to the methods of instruction, management, and discipline best suited to special cases. Such a record is of inestimable value as a means of securing practical child study on the part of every teacher. A glance at this record gives to each teacher the accumulated experience of the preceding teachers. It makes it comparatively easy to manage and instruct many who otherwise would never have been understood or interested.

In almost every school there are a number of very troublesome pupils who prove to be thorns in the flesh. A careful study is made of such; and

suggestions are given as to the best methods of reaching such individuals. The value of such knowledge to the teacher receiving the pupils will be understood and appreciated by every teacher of experience.

By thus coming closer to the individual, the teacher not only gains the sympathy of the pupils, but what is equally important for the proper development of their characters, the teacher's warmest sympathy goes out to the pupils. The school becomes a pleasant place, and the teacher has but little trouble in enlisting the pupils' permanent interest in all school work. Thus out of those who seem to be laggards or worse there are often developed earnest seekers after knowledge; and in place of confirmed idlers or troublesome truants there appear earnest workers, who are happier in school than elsewhere. By getting close to each individual the strong mind of the true teacher comes into close contact with the weaker mind of the pupil, warms into life the dormant faculties, and inspires healthy activity in all.

This close study of each pupil enables every teacher to discover many important traits of character, and the physical peculiarities which, but for this plan, would never have been discovered. In a vague way thoughtful educators know that many pupils are suffering greatly because they are not

thoroughly understood; yet all will be surprised to learn how many there are in every school who, though deserving special attention, are not discovered, even by the watchful teacher.

Many who had been condemned as lazy, or as unusually dull, were found to be near-sighted; and, having been placed in the rear of the room, were unable to receive benefit from the explanation of blackboard work given by teacher and pupils. Many others had been considered slow, when, in reality, they were partially deaf, and for years had been placed at a distance from the teacher, and for this reason had received but little benefit from either the instruction or the recitation.

Pupils who are afflicted with any physical weakness are always disposed to hide their deficiencies, and many are so sensitive that for years they are able to attend school day after day without the teachers discovering the fact, until special attention is given to the matter.

If this Individual Record had done nothing more than discover those who were deficient in sight and hearing, that their school life might be made more pleasant and profitable, it would have repaid more than a hundred-fold the trouble it made.

To give some idea of the discoveries made by the careful study of individuals, which this record demands, a few typical cases are mentioned. One

record reads as follows: "J. M. seems to have no interest in school work. Inattentive and listless, but does not resent correction. Very reticent. To all appearances is quite dull. Showed same characteristics in other schools." Some time later the following statement was made by the same teacher. "Upon further investigation, I found that J. M. is neither dull nor lazy. He rises between three and four o'clock each morning, and, until time for school, delivers New York papers. Many times comes to school without breakfast. Does this that he may help to support four younger brothers and sisters, who are worse than fatherless. Father a drunkard. Mother trying to keep family together. When boy found I had learned part, he told me all. I have been very considerate of him, and he is proving himself an entirely different kind of a pupil. Believe that, under more favorable circumstances, he would prove himself to be one of the brightest boys in the school." Will any person wonder that, under such circumstances, a boy could have but little enthusiasm left for school work? Unnumbered pupils have had their school lives cut short because they were not understood or because the teacher knew little and cared less about their peculiar characters and environments. This record, as has been pointed out above, is invaluable, then, not so much because it requires teachers to know

more of the individual pupils, but because the knowledge gathered leads to the teachers having a deeper sympathy with most of the pupils.

Another entry reads as follows: "S. R. seemed disposed to make all the trouble he possibly could. Was suspended, but did no better. Told some of the pupils he wished to be sent out of school. I was quite harsh with him. It is only fair to say that I felt sure that there was little, if any, good in him. However, after much trouble, I discovered that I was entirely mistaken in my estimate of his character. I found that he wanted to be suspended, not because he wished to run the streets, but because he wished to be at home with his mother, who was dying of consumption. He loved her better than his own life, and all he wanted was to remain at home and sit on the back steps, outside of his mother's room, that he might be near her all the time. He did not wish to tell about it, but when he did his story almost broke my heart. Yet I had come very near sending him for final suspension, that he could never return to school. But for the fact that we are required to make a careful study of all such cases, I would never have discovered the facts in the case. Now that his dear mother is dead, the principal and I are doing all in our power to comfort and help him, and he is one of the mildest, sweetest boys in the school."

The above are two of many similar cases which prove the great value of having some device which will require teachers to endeavor to learn much of each child committed to their care. Who can estimate the number of friendless boys and girls who might have been saved, if only the teacher had known all the facts? Is it any wonder that conscientious teachers shrink from their daily work lest they unintentionally turn some into the downward paths?

As all important facts concerning each individual are recorded, and suggestions made as to the methods of reaching many, the record proves of great value to those teachers who receive the pupils later.

## Chapter XVII.

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### BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF A RATIONAL PLAN OF GRADING.

Instruction Suited to the Pupils' Needs. The instruction is accurately suited to the needs of the pupils of each division. That the instruction should be suited, both in matter and method, to the ability and attainment of those to be taught, is a fundamental pedagogical axiom, upon which all others depend, and with which all others should be in harmony; yet, all know that it is violated in each recitation of nearly every school of our land, for the extremes of the classes cannot be benefited by the same instruction. Accurate adjustment of the instruction is possible under this plan, for the reason that pupils of very nearly equal ability are always together. Why should the "poor teacher" be condemned for the unsatisfactory results when she is not responsible for the existing conditions?

Pupils Kept Busy. The most careless observer

of children knows that they love to do what requires a reasonable amount of effort. When pupils were closely graded, so that work suitable to all could be assigned, the tendency to idleness almost vanished, and the need of punishment was greatly diminished in all classes, and entirely disappeared from many. Under the usual plan, all know that the brighter children are not kept busy; therefore they get into mischief.

Abolishes the Intellectual Treadmill. It does away with the intellectual treadmill, by which they are kept in constant motion, but never advance. It requires and easily secures the self-activity on the part of almost every child. In place of inattention, there is interested attention.

Essential Work Done Thoroughly. Under the usual plan, pupils are not thorough in the work passed over, though they spend far more time than should be required to do more work well. That they should be thorough in the essential work none dare deny. It is time we take the blame from the "poor teacher" and put it on the poorer method. Under this plan, all other things are secondary to thoroughness in the essentials. This is easily secured, for teachers are not expected to take pupils faster than they can do thorough work. It is no longer wondered why pupils went to school so long and knew so little when they stopped.



Provides for Daily Adjustment. In place of having the superintendent adjust the machine once each year to fit the convenience of superintendent and principals, this plan requires daily adjustment by principals and teachers to suit the needs of the pupils. While organization is necessary, it should be flexible and pliant, rather than rigid and unyielding.

The Bright and the Slow Benefited. All know that, under the usual plan, the bright are injured mentally and morally by being held down to the pace of the slowest; the plodders are likewise injured by being continually driven over the work faster than they should go. Under this plan, the brighter pupils are allowed to move forward as fast as they can do the work thoroughly. The mental and moral benefit resulting from this can scarcely be overestimated, and it is, perhaps, the most valuable result of this plan; for it develops strong, self-reliant workers, imbued with a new and deep interest in all knowledge. It develops and fixes improved mental habits, so that they become enthused with that highest pleasure which comes from the triumphs of the intellect. What is more important than the development of the habits of concentrated attention, courageous attack of difficulties, and of persistent, independent work? That these habits are results of this plan of grading is amply

proved to the satisfaction of those who have had experience with the plan. They now see that pupils naturally find pleasure in suitable work, especially when they find that further progress is the reward of earnest effort.

**High School Attendance Increased.** On all sides much regret is expressed that so few pupils reach the high school. Less than two per cent get to the highest grammar grade. Since this plan of grading was introduced, three years ago, the number attending the high school has more than doubled.

**Saves Time in the Recitations.** Most of the time used in the recitations is wasted by explaining what most pupils already know. Under this plan all this time and energy are saved. Therefore the recitation periods may be shortened, with profit to all.

**Number Reaching Higher Grades Increased.** Statistics prove that a much larger proportion of the pupils remain in school until the higher grades are reached. In every grammar school of the city there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils in the higher grades—the average per cent of increase for the different districts being about twelve. Surely this is an important matter, for in some cities ninety per cent of the pupils do not reach the grammar grades, and the reports show that eighty-one per cent of all the pupils in the

graded schools of this country are in the four lowest years of a twelve years course.

**Age of Pupils Entering the High School Lowered.** All deprecate the fact that pupils entering the high school are from one to five years older than they should be. During the past two years the average age of those entering the Elizabeth high school has decreased more than one year, while the classes about to enter will still further reduce this average.

**Gives Encouragement to Pupils.** Pupils are greatly encouraged, for, except because of absence, there are very few retrogressions. There are frequent promotions of the best, which result in leaving the slower ones about where they should be. When pupils are retrograded they fall but a short distance behind, and are generally kept in the same room. The thoughtful reader will easily appreciate the importance of this provision.

**But Few Lose Time.** As schools are generally managed, if any but the very brightest fall but a short distance behind the class, they must stumble along at the foot of the class and lose a year, when but a month or two back. Because of sickness, or for some of a hundred other reasons, nearly all of the pupils do lose time, and therefore fail to go forward. Statistics gathered in different cities show that eighty per cent of the pupils lose from one to

four years; and for every one hundred pupils in the schools examined, there had been from one hundred and twenty-five to three hundred and seventy years lost. Under this plan, if pupils fall behind their class they drop into a class but a short distance behind the one left; and as promotion may come at any time this lost ground is easily recovered. The records in Elizabeth show that, except because of absence, very few lose any time. All will acknowledge that it is an end to be greatly desired, when the system is such that pupils lose only the time they are absent. This system not only makes such provision that absent pupils go forward from the points they were when they left, but it makes it easy for those of ability to regain lost ground.

Nearly All Are Promoted Regularly. But few fail to be promoted. Those who do fail are not discouraged, for the reasons that they know promotion may come at any time and lost ground may easily be recovered.

Ninety Per Cent Gain Time. As under the usual plan it is almost impossible for a pupil to go to advanced work at any other than the time for regular promotions, it is readily understood why but few pupils gain time. Most of those who seem to do so really lose the time later, because they have omitted much essential work. Under this plan,

ninety per cent of those who go through the primary grades, or farther, will gain from one to four years. The teachers' records of several thousand pupils show that, during the past three years, eighty-five per cent of the pupils in Elizabeth gained from one to twenty months' time; while their average gain was over six months. This they did without any urging and almost without their knowing it.

**Secures Regular Attendance.** The plan makes school a pleasant place and greatly aids in securing regular and punctual attendance. The report of the state superintendent shows that of all the cities and towns in the state, Elizabeth has the best record for regular and punctual attendance.

**Lessons Prepared in School.** In most schools pupils recite nearly all of the time, and there is no time left for the preparation of lessons in school, where most of the lessons should be prepared. For this reason, either the lessons are not prepared, or they are prepared under the direction of the parents, who should not have to instruct their children, even if they are qualified to do so. With this plan the pupils have more than one-half of their time in school for the preparation of lessons. Thus they may be prepared under the direction of the teacher, who is best qualified, both by knowledge and experience, and whose duty it is to relieve the parents

of this task. Time is provided both in the morning and afternoon for individual assistance.

Approved by Principals, Teachers and Parents. Intelligent principals and teachers realize the weakness of the usual plan. Though not in favor of the plan at first, more than ninety per cent of the principals and teachers who have worked under this plan have given, in writing, their reasons for preferring it to any other. As published, these opinions show that the benefits to the teachers are as many and as marked as those reaped by the pupils. On all sides interested parents have expressed great satisfaction with the results obtained.

Financial Saving. As, under the usual plan, the great majority of the pupils are forced to stop school before they reach the grammar grades, at first sight it seems that there may be a saving; but, even considered in this narrow way, there is no saving, because of the fact that most of them have already lost as many years as they would likely have spent in the schools. Under this plan, if pupils get the same amount of education as they would under the usual plan, they will get it in from one to four years less time; therefore, the district would save what it would cost to educate the pupils for the number of years saved. For example: The records of a certain city, noted for its schools, show that, in the grammar grades, 35,000 pupils

had lost from one to four years, with a total loss of not less than 87,000 years. This number of years multiplied by \$40, the annual per capita cost in that city, shows a loss on these pupils of \$3,480,000. But, at the lowest calculation, under this plan, these pupils would have saved as much time as they lost under the usual plan, thus saving to the city \$6,960,000. But in this city, eighty-five per cent of the pupils were not in the grammar grades. If those in the lower grades were affected to the same extent, then the usual plan of grading would result in a loss to the city of \$39,440,000. Or, under this plan of grading, the city would have saved \$46,400,000, if all received the same amount of schooling as they would have under the usual plan. But it must not be forgotten that the pupils' productive lives would have been lengthened the number of years saved. Supposing each pupil could have earned \$100 a year, this would mean a saving to the pupils of \$201,800,000. This, added to the saving to the city, would show a total saving to pupils and city, of \$248,200,000. This might be continued further, but it is sufficient to show that, because of the usual method of grading, there is an appalling financial loss both to the school district and to the pupils.

## Chapter XVIII.

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### TESTIMONY OF PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS.

While the seeming great increase in the number of recitations led some teachers to look with disfavor on the plan, before they understood it, at the end of the first year's experience with it they not only favored it, but ninety-four per cent of the principals and teachers gave in writing their reasons for believing this plan best for teachers and pupils. As those considering any plan wish to know what the teachers who have had experience with the method think, a few of the many statements are given.

While there are always some ready to object to any change, experience in working out and putting into operation this plan shows that nearly all the opposition comes from those who have grown to believe that the schools are for them, rather than for the children; therefore, being more anxious to save themselves trouble than to benefit the chil-



dren, they prefer to continue in the "good old way," rather than make the necessary effort to get out of the rut. Others, who are striving to break away from the present unsatisfactory method, agree in saying that the teachers always ready to criticise their efforts are those who, having been ironclad in their methods and management, now feel keenly the truth that the effect of their methods have been most blighting. The beneficial results of this method to pupils and teachers have been so many and so marked, that not only are the principals and teachers unanimous in their hearty approval, but parents and pupils are enthusiastic in their indorsement of the method.

The following opinions as to the beneficial results of the plan were written by principals and teachers who had had from ten to forty years' experience with the usual method. As most of these were written at the end of the first year's trial, they call attention only to the benefits which appear at first. The opinions of a few principals are given, that other principals may know that the plan is more than satisfactory to those who are responsible for the organization and grading of the schools. Opinions of a few teachers of each grade are also given, to show that this plan is just as satisfactory in one grade as in another.

## OPINIONS OF PRINCIPALS.

The problem of how to reach the individual student in the mass-teaching of the public schools, and to advance him according to his ability without discouraging those who may be less able or less advanced, appears to have been satisfactorily solved by the system recently introduced into the public schools of Elizabeth by their superintendent, Prof. Shearer. The instruction is made profitable to all, instead of benefiting only the more brilliant minds.

\* \* \* Another feature is that when a general promotion is made the pupils are not all sent in bulk to the next class without any discrimination as to their relative ability, but those who can fulfill the requirements of the higher division of that class are placed in that division where they will meet with their peers, and those who are less advanced will seek their level in some other division of the same class.

\* \* \* The most careless observer can easily see that a personal interest and protection for each pupil, and an equal rule of justice for all the pupils, will be established, which has heretofore never been attempted in public school instruction.

\* \* \* Elizabeth has been fortunate in securing the benefits of this system for her schools.

\* \* Its good effects are everywhere apparent.

\* \* \* A system that must inevitably be adopted by every enlightened school board throughout the country as soon as the merits have been fully understood.

During forty years I have tried almost every plan that any one could think of, but I found noth-

ing satisfactory until I tried this plan of grading. It not only respects the individuality of the pupil, but it does the same for the teacher and the principal. \* \* \* Every sensible person who understands the system and believes the schools are for the children, must be unalterably in favor of Superintendent Shearer's new system.

I am heart and hand in favor of grading, and it certainly meets the requirements of our schools. Many children have made more progress in their studies than we thought possible at the outset; but the grading has made it possible for each child to do according to its ability.

The system of grading is an excellent thing. We fully believe that each individual scholar has been benefited by the division of the classes, and the special needs of each child have been more closely studied and better reached.

It seems to adapt itself to all conditions of the classroom. It affords an opportunity for each child to seek his own level. If he is ambitious and gifted with ability to move faster than his less fortunate associates he finds himself free to go on, with no barriers in front. If he is destined to belong to the great "mediocrity," he will find himself in congenial company. It aids discipline by leaving the least possible number unoccupied, and thus removes the tremendous strain from that teacher who attempts to hold the attention of forty-five or fifty pupils during a long recitation. The plan develops the individuality of the teacher, since she is thrown more upon her own resources, and given

an opportunity to think, act and adapt herself to the character of her pupils. It offers an incentive to the class. A lazy boy is awakened into activity by seeing his more industrious associates quietly and steadily slipping away from him; while a pupil who has failed to earn promotion is encouraged, for he knows that his failure does not throw him back a whole year.

The system of grading meets, I believe, a long-felt need. It cannot but be of advantage to both teacher and pupil. Its advantages are legion. It brings out the teacher's individuality, assists her to better understand the ability of the pupil, makes it possible to aid them more readily, and relieves her from the terrible (no other word expresses it) strain of feeling that her ability as a teacher is questioned if every scholar does not reach the same standing. When that fear is removed, she has all that extra energy (and who can say that it is not a little) to spend upon the development of the children.

Instruction is better suited to the needs of the pupil. Consequently more satisfactory results are likely to follow, more progress possible, and more thoroughness. The lessons assigned can be better adapted to the pupil's ability. There is a stronger incentive to merit promotion to the higher divisions.

It has proved very satisfactory. Every class in the school has completed the work of the grade, and many of the children in each class are well advanced in the work of the coming year. It has excited a healthful ambition in teachers and scholars

alike. It has shown both what they could do when allowed "to spread their wings and fly." The slower children, by being grouped with equals, are not discouraged by constant comparison of their work with that of the brighter ones. They may be among the leaders in their own division, whereas, if trying to pursue the work of the advanced class, they would be the laggards, and discouragement would surely follow. Quick and slow have been alike benefited, the latter spurred on and none retarded. It gives the teacher a chance she did not have under the old system.

#### OPINIONS OF TEACHERS.

##### First Year.

Brighter pupils are not kept waiting for their less fortunate neighbors. It makes the majority of pupils ambitious. It gives the teacher an opportunity to reach the individual pupil.

Better results can be secured when the attention does not flag. The brighter scholars can make as rapid progress as their mental development warrants. The teacher can much more rapidly find out the weak points of the pupils, and by giving them more individual attention can help them to make more rapid advancement in a given time.

Under the present system of grading the needs of the child may be better met. The old way was somewhat like making a square fit into a circle, or a pint hold a quart. The pressure upon the slow one caused him to become worried and nervous; it made school a burden and not a pleasure. The re-

pression of the brighter ones caused them to lose interest in the work, and, to illustrate well the old couplet: "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

A child kept busy with work suited to his needs and ability cannot fail to make progress. Under the present system this can be done with advantage both to teacher and scholar. Better attention can be secured. With the small groups it is easier to find out what each child knows.

#### Second Year.

It is a satisfactory solution for many of the problems that have always arisen in connection with our present school system generally. In my own class, the results of the new system have fully proven its good qualities. From the first a marked division as to mentality was apparent, and had I been obliged to force all to attain the same standard the effect would have been distressing to teacher and pupils. The system has also acted as a stimulus to effort and results that I would not have believed possible.

I prefer it to any other system, since it enables the teacher to become thoroughly acquainted with the ability and progress of every individual pupil, and aids her in leading them on, step by step.

I know more about my pupils individually than I did, and more time can be given for individual help.

The children know better how they stand in the subjects in which they are divided. The discipline

in my room has improved. The attention has also improved. Both the bright pupils and the slow ones are helped by it.

#### Third Year.

It enables bright children to advance more rapidly. A child absent from school can take up the work where he left off and again work his way up. Increases emulation.

Bright pupils are not kept back. Slower pupils are not pushed ahead. Better attention is secured.

Assists the teacher to understand, and therefore helps each child at his weakest point. It helps each child along as rapidly as he is capable of progressing. It develops a spirit of independence. It accomplishes more work, with greater thoroughness and, therefore, better results. It makes possible frequent promotions.

The advantages of the grading system are that the bright ones are not kept back, and the slow and particularly lazy ones are inspired to work.

#### Fourth Year.

Bright pupils can advance as rapidly as they are able. Dull pupils need not waste their time trying to do something entirely beyond them. Recitation periods can be shorter, and thus the interest in the lesson more easily sustained.

Grading this way enables a teacher to work with fewer pupils at a time. There are shorter periods for each lesson. The teacher can secure better attention and give more time to those who need more help.

Grading secures better attention. It awakens in the pupil the desire to go ahead and keep ahead.

The grading system allows the brighter pupils to advance rapidly, promotes their individual effort and ambition. The slower pupils have found their level and are stimulated to increased effort.

#### Fifth Year.

It gives the slow ones a place where they can work, and thus incites greater interest; the others can advance more rapidly because the slow ones are not hindering them.

Better attention is obtained from a smaller class. A smaller class gives an opportunity for more individual assistance on part of the teacher. Brighter pupils advance more rapidly.

The brighter pupils have a chance to advance more rapidly. The lazy pupils become more ambitious. The slow pupils are not pushed beyond their ability, consequently make more progress. The pupils have more time for studying during during school hours; can be kept more busy, and have less time for play.

Can find more exactly what each pupil can do. Can help individuals much better than when the class is in one large division. The children are interested; the backward ones ambitious to advance to a higher division. Scholars advance more rapidly and are more thorough.

#### Sixth Year.

It allows more time for individual work among pupils. It allows the brighter pupils to advance



more rapidly. It enables the more backward pupils to more thoroughly understand their work.

The brighter pupils are not held back by the slow ones, and therefore advance more rapidly. The slow pupils are not made to hurry, and therefore make more progress. More time can be allowed pupils for study during school hours.

More direct attention can be given to those who need help in any particular thing. It allows the brighter ones to go on faster than they otherwise could. It improves the attention. It incites pupils to study in order to be in the highest division.

I think the great advantage of the system is that a pupil may be placed just where he can do the best work.

#### Seventh Year.

The brighter pupils can accomplish more by not waiting for the slow ones. The slow pupils are not hurried along faster than they are able to go. The teacher has time for individual attention and the pupils more time for study. If a child loses lessons by absence he can be dropped to the lower division and not be changed to a lower room.

There is always something for each one to try for. I have been able to give more individual attention and instruction than I otherwise could.

It has been a direct incentive to study, and has made all more studious. Many of those supposedly dull got to work and showed they had been lazy. It has created a natural, rather than forced, interest in lessons. It has enabled me to get

nearer the individual, and to know what each one was worth.

I don't have to hold back at one end and push and drive at the other, as I used to, but all are working where they can do thorough work. What could be better for teacher and pupil? I would never return to the old way voluntarily.

#### Eighth Year.

The brighter pupils can advance more rapidly. The slow ones are not pushed beyond their ability. The pupils have more time for study in school hours. It is easier to hold the attention twenty minutes than forty. It secures better results.

Bright go on faster. Dull are not hurried. More attention to the individual, and special needs discovered. All are busy on work they can do, so are not forced to get into mischief to keep busy. I don't have to make slow pupils seem to be what they are not. Results are far better than could possibly have been secured by the usual plan of grading.

The dullest and brightest have been kept busy. There seems to be no lazy pupils, as of old. Even the "bad boys" seem to have left us. Instead are found earnest workers, who know they will go to advanced work when ready, and no sooner.

The mind of each child can steadily grow without being forced. Dull pupils are encouraged to do their best work without being hurried. Each student is trained in concentration of thought upon his own work, to the exclusion of other matters.

### High School.

Because of their having been at work with equals, and where their ability put them, they have acquired excellent habits of study. They are able to concentrate their attention to the work as other classes never could.

Make greater effort. Indolent find they must work or be left behind, so they "settle down" to work. Am heartily in favor of it.

Does away with the problem, How shall I make my teaching benefit extremes of class?

Attention secured without trouble. as both lessons and method of instruction can be adapted to classes. Pupils come to high school with greatly improved mental habits.

## Chapter XIX.

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### EDITORIAL INDORSEMENT.

From several hundred lengthy editorial reviews by the leading papers of many states, the following excerpts are taken, as indicative of the fact that the necessity for some change is everywhere apparent, and is wisely read by discerning editors. From them, those who have been slow to do what they knew to be best, may learn, that, true to their high calling, editors are ready to give their valuable assistance to any rational plan for the improvement of our grand system of schools. As many superintendents and principals are dependent upon the sentiment of the community for their positions, it is of great importance that they should know how any contemplated change is likely to be received by those interested in the schools. It is for this purpose that these extracts are given; but for this reason they would have been omitted entirely. Avoiding, so far as possible, all personal reference, a number of extracts are given from papers of the cities in which the plan has been in operation. From these it may be learned that, though all innovations are received with suspicion and opposition, yet the results obtained by this plan have been

such as to prevent any adverse criticism, which would naturally be expected from those wedded to the past. Extracts from papers in all parts of the United States are given to show that the interest is widespread and that the indorsement is unanimous and unqualified.

Results Amazingly Satisfactory. The system was introduced by Superintendent Shearer with amazingly satisfactory results. \* \* \* The Pittsburg papers suggested that the system introduced in New Castle be adopted by the Pittsburg schools. The system will not admit of a full explanation here, but the results of actual trial savor of the marvelous. Other cities are urging its adoption. \* \* \* and it is probable that \* \* \* the system will eventually be adopted all over the country.—[New Castle Courant.

Has Worked Wonders. This method has been adopted in New Castle for the past two years, and has worked wonders. \* \* \* Superintendent Shearer has worked hard to complete his method, and not until he had given it a thorough trial did he give anything to the public concerning it.—[New Castle News.

Absurd to Compare With Other Plans. \* \* \* What an absurdity it is to compare two plans which are so far apart in theory and to say that as time-savers they are equally efficient. \* \* \* In one, that at Elizabeth, the theory is to carry the pupils up the ladder step by step as fast as they can go. In the other, all over a great city, once a year

the scholars make a flying leap aloft. If they fail they stay a year longer on the old level.—[Newark News.

Pittsburg Urged to Adopt the Plan. The force of this line of reasoning is incontestable. We hear much of the need of uniformity in school teaching. The young idea must, forsooth, be cultivated by rule and square, ignoring individuality and the different type of taste and character. \* \* \* Take away these safeguards of the system which fit the square unit of humanity into a round hole, and vice versa. \* \* \* It has taken the pedagogic fraternity, anywhere, a long time to realize this. \* \* \* The heaven is working, however, and the step taken at New Castle may be hailed as an exemplification of a tendency that will ultimately extend to every school district in the state. Pittsburg, it is to be hoped, will not be far behind-hand in adopting so beneficial and rational a reform.—[Pittsburg Leader.

A System Long Needed. When Professor Shearer first explained his system of grading public school scholars, it was not quite clear to the lay mind how he could accomplish the work of combining the advantages of the individual and class systems, so that those who could study rapidly need not be retarded, and those who made slow progress need not be pushed beyond their ability. The trial has been made, and the Cherry street public school is taken as an example of the results. Under the new system they may enter the high school in January, thus saving nine months of time.

But this class and this particular school are not the only ones enjoying the advantages of the new system of grading and promoting. Further than this, the system is in operation in all public schools here, so that the principals' reports show that not less than forty-five per cent of all the pupils have gained from three to nine months. \* \* \* The most popular feature of the system, but by no means the most important, will doubtless be the saving of money to the taxpayers. The children will make more rapid progress, and as it costs less to teach three years than it does to teach five, the money will go just so much further in carrying on the public schools. But the really important feature is the better instruction given to the children, through closer attention to the individual scholars. It certainly seems that Professor Shearer has studied out and applied the system which has long been needed to overcome the almost mechanical style of teaching, grading, and promoting, that has unavoidably become fastened upon the public schools of this country.—[Elizabeth Daily Journal.

**Merits Triumphantly Demonstrated.** Professor Shearer's method of grading, of which he has so triumphantly demonstrated the merits in our own schools, is rapidly becoming adopted all over the country, and the communications from important centres which he is daily receiving show how widespread is the interest in it. The article in the Atlantic Monthly, which first drew public attention to the method, is an able piece of practical exposition.—[Elizabeth News.

Commended to Newark and Other Cities. To Newark educational authorities the result of the system of close grading pursued in Elizabeth schools is commended for investigation and study. The great majority of public school scholars attend but a few years. If one system can help them along in its essential studies further than another can or does, it may exert an influence which will not only save and improve their time, but will assist them their whole lives long. The public school ought to do more for the children who leave early. It ought to attract and hold many of those who leave, not because of necessity, but because they become indifferent and discouraged. If the system that has been tried in Elizabeth helps the schools to meet these requirements, and if it enables the scholars to make more rapid progress all along the line, it is a good system, and one that other cities cannot afford to neglect.—[Newark News.

Applicable to Any System of Schools. A system of school grading which has attracted much attention all over the country is that inaugurated by Mr. W. J. Shearer while superintendent of the schools at New Castle, Pa. The leading newspapers from New England to California commented upon it in lengthy reviews, and letters of approval were received from college presidents and professors, school superintendents and teachers of every grade. The results show that it is applicable in any school system. The high praise accorded it by the people of Elizabeth and several of the lead-



ing papers of New Jersey, and the readiness with which the teachers adopt it have induced the school officers of other cities to investigate the plan with a view of introducing it.—[New York School Journal.

Results Silence Adverse Criticism. There is an old saying about the proof of the pudding, etc., which Professor S. can now quote with peculiar satisfaction, for the results are certainly such as to silence adverse criticism and to prove conclusively that the system is a great advance over the old way. It is not a theory, but a system, which has had a thorough trial, and its results are in the highest degree satisfactory. \* \* \* Pupils may congratulate themselves that individual effort is sure to be rewarded.—[New Castle Courant.

Must Be Merit in the Plan. There is no discounting the effect of this method. When the effort at closer grading and direct individual instruction can, in one year's trial, make a good proportion of the Elizabeth grammar schools gain admission to the high school nine months ahead of schedule time, there must be merit in it.—[Newark News.

Dr. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Favored a Similar Plan. Attention is called to the fact that Commissioner Harris, twenty years ago, when he was superintendent of the St. Louis schools, advocated something very similar. We have carefully read these recommendations of Dr. Harris, but we fail to find that he offered any specific method of carrying out his ideas, or that he cites any practical schoolroom experiments, show-

ing that they had been carried out. There were a number of philosophers and geographers before Columbus's time who had announced their belief in the world's sphericity; but this fact detracts nothing from the credit due Columbus for carrying the idea to a successful demonstration. If Superintendent Shearer has devised and put into operation a generally workable plan for avoiding the evils of the present chain-gang system of gradation and promotion, he has fairly earned the hearty plaudits, not alone of his fellow teachers, but of the general public as well.—[Learning By Doing.

Adopted Unanimously. At a meeting of the school board and teachers, it was unanimously decided to invite Superintendent Shearer to visit Smyrna at his earliest convenience for the purpose of introducing his new system of grading in the public schools here. In introducing this system of grading the school authorities are not trying an experiment, but are merely adopting a feasible plan that has met with general approval in the many towns and cities where it has been put into use.—[Smyrna Call.

Should Be Indorsed and Introduced Throughout the Country. If Professor Shearer has sufficient courage and individual independence to break away from the long established methods of the faulty graded school system, and devise a plan and carry it into execution, too, it should not only be commended but indorsed and introduced in the graded schools throughout the country.—[Winona Herald.

Wanted in Sandusky. His plan is an excellent one. We suggest that the board of education communicate with Mr. Shearer with a view of introducing this rational system of grading into the public schools of Sandusky. Then we may have more boys and girls graduating from the High School than we have now, and that particular grade be of some use and pay for the expense it entails on our people.—[Sandusky Register.

Every Superintendent Should Investigate. Admit these facts and it would seem the part of wisdom for every superintendent of a public school to investigate this method. It ought to work a revolution in public school systems.—[Augusta Chronicle.

First Well-Digested Plan Suitable to Any School. The truest patriots are those who seek to develop the best that is in the people of the country. Mr. Shearer is the first person in authority to my knowledge to express what I have long felt, and who has put his views into a well-digested plan, which can be worked out in every school. I am certain that it or a similar plan will be adopted, for it is, as he says, "a rational system of grading."—[Brooklyn Eagle.

Pupils and Teachers Sacrificed on the Altar of System. It is not too much to say that in the larger cities both pupils and teachers have been largely sacrificed on the altar of system and red tape routine.—[Grand Rapids Democrat.

Watched by Every Educator in the United States Who Is Doing Earnest Work. Each child

has an individuality, and it is this individuality that is the most precious thing in the child, yet we seek to destroy it by our system of grading public schools. Our system does not care for the individuality. W. J. Shearer has introduced a plan which is working successfully, and which is being watched with extreme interest by every educator in the United States who is doing earnest work. Our educators in the Sacramento county should study the Shearer plan, and it should be applied to our schools, if found to be what it is claimed. If not, some other plan of grading should be discovered, for the present system is an abomination.—[San Francisco Bee.

No Educator Will Dispute the Principle. We do not suppose that any educator will seriously dispute that this is the correct principle in education. The system of education by regiments is not education at all. Children are more apt to suffer from enforced idleness than from overwork. There is certainly no doubt that as schools are graded in this city and other large cities, too many minds are set to keep the same time. Like clocks in a jewelry shop they soon cease to run in unison and a dismal clangor takes the place of harmony.—[Minneapolis Times.

The Present System of Grading All Wrong. We do not advocate overwork in the school room. But we do say that the present system of gradation is all wrong. Children are no more alike than the patients that are treated at a hospital, and the sooner our school system gets down to a more liberal

and a more sensible classification and gradation, the better it will be for all.—[Sacramento Bee.

**The Effect of the Usual System Disastrous.** Between the freedom of the country school and the stiffness of the city grades, there must be a middle ground, capable of adaptation to the city schools. This Mr. Shearer thinks he has found, and its trial in the schools of his and other cities adopting his suggestions confirms him. It should be the work of school board, of the superintendent and principals and teachers to give to the plan a careful examination during the coming vacation with the object of determining whether our schools cannot be made more effective by its adoption here. Ultimately the effect of the usual system cannot fail to be disastrous.—[St. Paul Globe.

**Principals and Teachers Enthusiastic.** Superintendent Shearer met with the principals and teachers of our public schools and outlined a plan of changing from the present method of grading. The new system was put into operation yesterday and it promises to revolutionize our schools and put them at the head of all others in the state of Delaware. Principals and teachers are enthusiastic over the work.—[Smyrna Times.

**A Remedy for Defects.** There can be no question that every step toward individualism is a step toward a desired end. Mr. Shearer's system has attracted to it the attention of educators, and is worthy of thoughtful consideration as a remedy for defects which are admitted to exist.—[Keokuk (Ia.) Gate-City.

Needed to Get the Best Results. To correct the evils complained of, Professor W. J. Shearer, Superintendent of schools in Elizabeth, N. J., has formulated and put into operation a system to which the attention of the friends of education all over the country cannot too quickly be directed and acted upon, if we are to obtain from our schools the best possible results.—[Haverhill Daily.

Adopted in Dayton. The new plan of grading pupils, adopted in the public schools, is not original here. It is the same plan which is being used in other cities, and for which we have to thank the superintendent of the public schools of Elizabeth, N. J.—[Dayton (O.) News.

Leading Cities About to Adopt. Nothing in the nature of educational ways and means that has appeared in a decade has made so much impression on the public mind as the reform in gradation and promotion that has been carried out by Superintendent Shearer. This article has caught the public ear through the general press, which has widely and favorably commented upon the remedy that Mr. Shearer offers for the prevalent chain-gangism of our graded schools. Already a number of our leading cities have made arrangements for putting the Shearer method in operation. In another column we give a brief synopsis of this method, which bids fair to win the favor of the people as well as of progressive teachers.—[Learning By Doing.

Mossy Conservatism Should Not Prevent Its Adoption. The grading system which prevails in nearly all the public and many of the private

schools of this country is a source of considerable embarrassment and worry to parents and children, and, we doubt not, to teachers. Within the yearly limits, at least, the brightest pupils must regulate their progress by the possibilities of the dullest. The dullest work under conditions of great discouragement, because of the strain of the pace set by the brightest. \* \* \* Here are results which ought to set educators thinking. Elizabeth is a comparatively small city, but if she employs a plan every way more effective and economical than the prevailing method, pride, or prejudice, or mossy conservatism should not stand in the way of its adoption.—[Boston Transcript.

California Approves. The subject is one of such high interest that analysis of the new scheme must be reserved for distinct treatment. It is, however, timely to say that we have information that some of the leading educators of this state warmly espouse the new idea, and in official educational quarters it has strong friends. \* \* \* To this time the new method has been successful even beyond expectation. \* \* \* Documentary evidence before us presents the testimony of teachers and school officials, that under the trial it is completely successful. As successful results always silence criticism these witnesses must be said to have closed the case against the present system and of approval of the new. Pennsylvania and Illinois propose to give the plan a trial, and Boston, slow always to leave her own paths, is seriously considering the New Jersey idea,

while New York educational journals are urging its consideration by the educational authorities of the Empire State.—[Sacramento Record-Union.

People Should Demand Reforms. It is apparent to laymen that the greatest educators of the country differ as to the merits of the present school system. \* \* \* Superintendent Shearer combats the system in a way to interest the people and to prompt them to demand reforms; and it would be well for the public schools and the pupils if all educators received such criticism kindly and worked together to improve the public school system, instead of getting into caustic disputes with one another about it.—[Norwich (Conn.) Bulletin.

The Usual Way Unworthy of an Enlightened Age. The unjust and impracticable rule that all must go over a certain amount of space, measured by text books, in a certain time, and all do the same amount of work, in the same way, regardless of individual ability, individual opportunity or any other attendant circumstances, is unworthy of an enlightened age in the management of a school curriculum, and Superintendent Shearer has not shown it up one hour too soon.—[Bridgeport (Conn.) Standard.

Thoughtful Educators Interested. For some years Professor Shearer has devoted much time and study to a special and personal system for grading students in the public schools. \* \* \* It is scarcely necessary to say that the success of the Shearer system has attracted the attention of all thoughtful educators.—[Trenton Evening Time-



The Teacher Becomes an Educator in the True Sense. Under such a system as Mr. Shearer has established a teacher becomes an educator in the true sense of the term, and the mind of a pupil is not looked upon as a knowledge box, with carefully arranged and plainly labeled compartments, from which the teacher at the end of the school term is to bring forth the article needed to insure promotion.—[Philadelphia Inquirer.

Every Parent and Every Teacher Interested. Every parent and every teacher is interested in the grading of pupils in the schools, and all are anxious to advocate the method which will result in the greatest good to the greatest number of scholars. \* \* \* Arbitrary grading is the practice nearly everywhere. \* \* \* He has put into practice a system of his own which is operating with satisfaction to both instructors and pupils.—[Wilkesbarre Record.

An Excellent Plan. W. J. Shearer points out the defects of the graded system, which usually does not provide for the individual differences, but keeps the pupils in an intellectual lock-step. He sets forth an excellent plan for advancing pupils who are in advance of the grade they are in, which has worked admirable results.—[Minneapolis Journal.

Sure to Be Adopted by Progressive Schools. What Commissioner Harris advocated is in line with the best thought on school management and is coming to be more advocated. The same sub-

ject was treated exhaustively, \* \* \* and it was shown how the plan now advocated by Dr. Harris can be made to work successfully. It is almost sure to be adopted by the schools of the country, especially those that are progressive and seeking to improve all the time. \* \* \* In the past there has been too much of the theory and practice that the pupil should be made to fit the school system rather than the system fit the pupil.—[Salt Lake City Herald.

Calculated to Make Men and Women, Not Machines. Mr. Shearer has made one of the most sensible and independent criticisms ever penned on our public schools. \* \* \* The theory is—and the practice follows the theory—that the discipline which converts each pupil into a separate cog, bar or rivet, in one great machine, is the finest thing in life. \* \* \* The effort to reach the standard breaks down more women than statisticians ever count. \* \* \* Whatever advantage is gained from numbers is retained. \* \* \* In short, the methods outlined by Mr. Shearer are calculated to make men and women, and not machines; and as Providence probably intended children to become men and women, and to think for themselves, he may be considered as assisting Providence, which is more than can be said for some other educational leaders.—[Washington (D. C.) Times.

Denver Likes the Plan. Experiments in secondary education are no longer the exclusive property of rock-bound Massachusetts, and something new,

which will doubtless be much discussed in the educational world, is announced from Elizabeth, N. J. There a system of grading has been in effect in the public schools, the practical results of which seem to justify its continuance, for not less than forty-five per cent of the pupils have gained three to nine months, to say nothing of the individual development gained by the degree of attention the teacher is enabled to give personally under the new system. \* \* \* So far, very good. It is hoped that more will be heard from this something which is capable of accomplishing so much that is desirable in the educational work.—[Denver Post.

Even Cultured Boston May Learn. The new system of grading in public schools, which Superintendent Shearer of Elizabeth, N. J., has carried into practical effect, seems to be justified by its practical results. Promotion comes with merit at frequent intervals in the school year. It is not secured or lost at one or two nerve-exhausting examination tests. \* \* \* Who will say that the educational magnates of cities far larger than Elizabeth, N. J., may not find something to learn from Shearerism in practice? Who will deny that even cultured Boston may profit by the object lesson Superintendent Shearer has been giving in the science of practical education in our public schools? —[Boston Globe.

Will Be Widely Introduced. Many superintendents have made a study of the pedagogic advantages of the system and the splendid results achieved in Elizabeth, and the indications are that

it will be widely introduced at the beginning of the next school year. \* \* \* —[New York School Journal.

Need of a Change Felt in Washington, D. C. Excellent as the public schools \* \* \* undoubtedly are, they have not yet reached a point from which no chance for progress is discernable. \* \* \* In the important matter of examinations and promotions the schools of nearly all the cities and towns, including those of the District of Columbia, are believed to be open to just criticism. \* \* \* This species of senseless injustice \* \* \* still exists. Some of the brightest pupils have records of stupidity where they should have high rating. \* \* \* We commend Professor Shearer's statement to the careful consideration of those who have charge of the splendidly successful school system that has come to be an honor to this District.—[Washington Post.

Hopes It Will Be Followed Elsewhere. Superintendent Shearer, with a radicalism which is very rare in his profession, has boldly declared against the evils of the graded system, and has been laboring to correct them. \* \* \* For the great proportion of them it means the saving of three years time in the full course, and this means, of course, a corresponding saving to those who support the schools. \* \* \* The fact that the movement originates from the inside, and has proven a success encourages the hope that it may be followed elsewhere.—[Detroit Free Press.

Correct in Condemning the Usual Method. A rigid system of promotions \* \* \* is responsible for many failures. \* \* \* If Mr. Shearer is correct in his deductions, he has certainly done an important service for the community in which he labors. He is certainly correct in condemning the unsatisfactory system at present in vogue.—[Providence Journal.

It Is Certain to Be Welcomed by the People. There is encouragement in the fact that, despite the inertia of conservatism, a noteworthy degree of success has attended the efforts of Superintendent Shearer these ten years and more, to promote and establish a more rational system. \* \* \* A plan which has been adopted, we are glad to know, in not a few cities and towns. It will not do for men immovably set in their ways to style the Shearer Plan impracticable in large cities. Whatever makes for rational methods in education, whatever tends to break down the "lock-step grading" \* \* \* is certain to be welcomed by the people. Mr. Shearer's plans have successfully endured the test of practice in Elizabeth and elsewhere for years. They may well be given a free and fair trial wherever the "Procrustes bed" system of grading and promotion prevails to the great detriment of real education.—[Boston Globe.

Radically the Best System. Believing in this system as radically the best \* \* \* the Truth gave an account of its workings as a suggestion for improvement in the Scranton public schools. \* \* \* It will be a great advance for the Scranton

schools when this system shall be introduced here.  
—[Scranton Truth.

Based on Sound Educational Principles. Professor Shearer \* \* \* is to be credited with the inauguration of a system of promotion which not only does away with the terrors of examination day, but by the establishment of more classes and easier gradations allows the pupils to advance as rapidly as their individual endowments will permit. \* \* \* The system has been long enough in use to indicate that it is based on sound educational principles \* \* \* and its merits have evidently won such favorable recognition that it may ultimately become a part of the school system of the state.—[Philadelphia Record.

Common Sense Methods. These results merit attention. The system seems in effect a reversion in part to the ungraded school, but it is none the worse for recognizing the value of common sense methods.—[Baltimore Sun.

A Distinct Service to Education. Superintendent William J. Shearer of Elizabeth, N. J., has performed a distinct service to education by making a vigorous assault on the prevalent illogical, stupid and unsatisfactory system of gradation and promotion in our graded schools. Unlike many reformers, Superintendent Shearer has not opened fire until his batteries were well supplied with ammunition; neither has he undertaken the demolition of existing structures without having abundant materials at hand for rebuilding.—[Learning By Doing.

No Reason Why Other Cities Cannot Have Its Advantages. At this season of the year \* \* \* it seems pertinent to call attention to the rational system of grading which has been urged for over ten years by Professor W. J. Shearer, superintendent of schools at Elizabeth, N. J., and which has been in practical and successful operation in that city. \* \* \* It is no mere theory, but a carefully planned system, the claims for which are based upon the excellent results which have followed wherever it has been adopted. If properly started, there should be no reason why equally good results cannot be secured for other towns and cities. \* \* \* It is approved by principals, teachers and parents, and there has been a distinct financial saving. If it works so well elsewhere, why would it not work well in the city of Boston?—[Boston Transcript.

## Chapter XX.

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### HOW MANY GRADED SCHOOL MAY EASILY ADOPT A PLIANT PLAN OF GRADING.

At last the large majority of educators agree that the providing of a more rational plan of grading is the most pressing demand now made of them. Indeed, many claim that for years they have felt keenly the need of a more pliant method, but have done nothing to provide such, for the reason that no one has been willing to lead the way, though several have indicated the direction in which others should go. It is earnestly hoped that those truly interested in the problem of providing a more satisfactory method of grading will find some assistance in the following suggestions, drawn from years of experience.

Study carefully and persistently the whole problem of school grading. Endeavor to gain a clear understanding of the principles underlying a proper plan of classification, following not the thoughts of one, but making an effort to grasp all the ideas bearing upon the subject. After having



carefully studied and weighed the arguments in favor and against each plan and device, decide which can be used to best advantage in the schools under you.

See clearly the serious defects of the usual method and plan to remedy them, taking great care not to go to the opposite extreme. The defects are grievous; but rushing blindly to the opposite extreme will not be very beneficial to the pupils and may be disastrous to the person advocating the radical change.

Give special consideration to the local conditions by which you are surrounded. While the principles are the same, the methods of reaching the ends are greatly influenced by local conditions. You may be able to reach the desired end far more easily than others; but, on the other hand, it may happen that what is easy to secure under other conditions may be very hard for you to gain because of your peculiar environments.

An important requisite is that you see clearly the end which you wish to reach, and then carefully adopt the best means of reaching that end. Therefore, until you know exactly what you wish to do, do not start. In school organization as well as in every other part of school work, as in life, nearly all failures are the result of not seeing clearly the end to be reached.

Have good reasons for every change suggested. You should not advocate any change unless you have strong arguments in favor of such changes. You have no right to expect others to accept your conclusions, unless you have the best of reasons for your conviction.

“Make haste slowly” applies with great force here; the usual plan has been in use for many years, and it is better to bear with it a little longer than to put in jeopardy the success of the effort to improve upon it. After having been in the rut for many years it is unreasonable to expect principals and teachers to get out of their accustomed grooves suddenly. It is well to take one step at a time, give good reasons therefor, and wait for the more intelligent and thoughtful teachers to discover the benefits of the change. Plan for a gradual evolution rather than a sudden revolution. It will be found that a large majority of the principals and teachers are deeply interested in doing what is for the best; and when shown clearly what steps should be taken they are quick to respond.

Consider well the attempts which others have made to remedy the defective grading, and learn from their failures and successes. The principals and teachers who do not learn from the failures of others will have much to learn from their own failures. It is a wise teacher who learns from the mis-

takes of others; and a very foolish one who insists upon learning nothing save at the dear school which experience keeps.

Plan carefully for the accurate classification of pupils, so that those who can do the same work may be placed together in classes. Grade as accurately as possible; for the weakness of the graded school is not in its being graded, but in its not being sufficiently well graded. The only way to eradicate the evils of defective grading is to grade more accurately. A basic condition of any proper method of grading is the accurate classification of pupils

After having pupils accurately graded, it is absolutely necessary to keep them with those of about equal ability and attainments; therefore the great importance of reclassification, which is the only means of reaching this much desired end. Pupils may be accurately classified at the beginning of the month, and yet before the middle of the month the need of reclassification may become very apparent. Accurate classification is a necessary first step, the importance of which superintendents and principals have realized, and for which many have made provision. It is greatly to be regretted that so many have been willing to stop there, for it will be of little benefit if provision is not made for reclassification.

Have a short class interval. The course of study

may be divided into but a few sections, but the different classes of pupils should be but a short distance apart. They should all move steadily forward, but at different rates, and the work should be so arranged that pupils can easily pass from one division to the next.

As a factor in determining classification and reclassification, nothing is more important than the basis, frequency and time of promotion; therefore, in studying this subject the basis of promotion must be considered carefully. The basis of promotion must not be the examination. Be assured of this. If the reasons already presented are not sufficient proof of this statement, look for others. Many educators have tried to reach the desired end without totally abandoning this bulwark of uniformity, which makes reclassification almost impossible at other than the regular promotion times. They have failed utterly. From their failures learn the importance of striking at the root of the evil. It will not be sufficient to promote only at regular intervals. Suitable provision must be made for reclassification at any time when the interests of the pupils demand it. However, there should be regular promotions one or more times each year, when all should move forward. Experience proves that it is best to have general promo-

tions but once each year, with suitable provision for reclassification.

Everyone knows that children differ in ability, and therefore such provision should be made as will enable pupils to cover the course as fast as they are able, and no faster; there need be no fear that this will lead to disorganization. As has been pointed out, it is necessary to have a course of study, but it is not necessary that all should finish it in the same time. Therefore a definite part of the work should not be required in a given time.

From a careful study of the preceding chapters some suggestions may be drawn. Get all the good you can by a careful consideration of those chapters suggesting methods of reaching the desired ends. They will likely be of greater benefit than any others; for they will show how this plan, or a similar one, can be put in operation in such a way as to enlist the liveliest interest of all. Gather all the information you can elsewhere. Then study the problem for yourself, adapting and adopting those devices which you believe to be most likely to meet your conditions.

Years of experience prove that the principal or teacher who follows the suggestions given above will have no trouble in gradually working out a far more satisfactory plan than at first seemed possible.

## Chapter XXI.

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### THE GRADING OF THE UNGRADED SCHOOL.

#### THERE SHOULD BE A COURSE OF STUDY.

Though space does not permit more than a very brief consideration of the subject, some attention must be given to the grading of the ungraded school; for, since the schools of all the towns and cities have been graded, many continue to urge the importance of grading the rural schools in the same way. So far as having a graded course of study is concerned, this is an important step in the right direction, for every school should have a course of study, and pupils should take up the different branches in that order which experience has proved to be the best. Some urge the importance of having the course of study for the rural schools very much different from that mapped out for the graded school; but it is now generally agreed that the courses for these schools should be practically the same. They must differ in minor details, how-

ever, the course for the rural schools being made flexible, so that, if possible, the number of classes may be reduced—when this can be done without injury to the pupils.

The authorities of several states and many earnest county superintendents have gone farther, and have insisted upon having the district school graded in the same manner as the city school. It is claimed by these that, since the close classification in the city schools possesses so many marked advantages, therefore like benefits would follow the grading of the rural schools. That this would be the case, if the conditions were the same, most will acknowledge. However, the conditions are not the same, and many now see that there are serious objections to forcing upon the rural schools methods which, because of the different conditions, are impracticable.

#### THE RURAL SCHOOL NOT UNGRADED.

All through the preceding chapters the term the “ungraded school” has been used in its generally accepted meaning to designate the rural school. However, in the consideration of this problem, it should not be forgotten that the schools which are supposed to be ungraded are, in reality, schools composed of many grades of pupils; while the so-called graded schools are supposed to have but one

grade of pupils. The rural school, of necessity, has always been a many-graded school, with many classes, and not an ungraded school in any sense of the word; so that the grading of the rural school is no new idea. It has always been graded, though not in the same manner, nor to the same degree, as the one-graded school.

#### GOOD WORK DONE IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS.

Many of those who argue so strongly for the grading of the rural school labor under the impression that good work cannot be done in these schools. But good work has been done and is now being done in very many of these schools. It is true that, because of the small salaries and short terms, it is very difficult to secure and hold efficient teachers. It must also be acknowledged that the supervision is generally very meagre. However, in spite of these and other drawbacks, there is much excellent work being done in schools having several grades of pupils in the same room.

This is not intended to be an argument in favor of having schools classified as they are in the rural school, when it is possible to have a better classification; but it should be remembered that there is a possibility of securing excellent results in such schools. It is proper to call attention to the fact that nearly all of our great men were educated in



rural schools; that, until comparatively lately, even the city schools were not graded as they are now; that the school of Pestalozzi was not graded; that even now some rural schools are giving more real education than is being given by many strictly graded schools; that, in this belief, many educators state that they would prefer to have their children under a good teacher in a rural school rather than under an equally efficient teacher working under the usual method of grading.

#### ATTEMPTS TO GRADE THE UNGRADED SCHOOL.

The attempts to grade the so-called ungraded school have been efforts to reduce the number of classes, by roughly grouping pupils into three or more divisions. This consolidation of classes necessitated the placing of pupils of very unequal attainments in the same class. In most cases, pupils were from one to three years ahead or behind other members of their class. In no case were the pupils of about the same ability held together and required to do the same work.

In previous chapters, attention has been called to the fact that the serious defects of the usual plan of grading are the direct result of having, in the same class, pupils of unequal advancement and ability. It has already been shown that, with very few exceptions, all leading educators agreed that it re-

sults in serious injury to pupils to be classed with those who were even a year in advance or behind them. Nearly all expressed their belief that the effect of this system is to "discourage the less mature and sluggish minds of a class, while it wastes the opportunities of the bright minds." How much more injurious the holding of pupils in classes with those who are two or more years in advance or behind other members of the class. Such a plan is not classification for the benefit of the pupils; it is roughly herding them, for the supposed convenience of the teachers, and to the everlasting injury of the pupils. It is not differentiating for the purpose of reaching a higher type of organization: it is the very opposite, and can result only in disorganization. It is not grading the ungraded school, as many think: it is making an ungraded school out of a many-graded school. Pupils are formed into classes, but they are not classified. The work may be graded to classes, but it is not suited to the pupils in the classes. In striving for one of the benefits of the one-graded school, such a plan surrenders the many advantages of the many-graded school, without securing the advantages of the one-graded school. Under such a plan, the instruction cannot be suited to the needs of the majority of the pupils. The attention cannot be held and concentrated upon subjects which are of little

or no interest to most of those in the class. There will be no emulation. In short, there can be but little education, though, even under the most unfavorable circumstances, pupils will learn from each other, in spite of teachers and methods.

#### OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE OF TWELVE.

In 1895 the National Educational Association appointed a committee of twelve prominent educationists to make a special study of rural school problems. After two years of thorough investigation and study, this committee made a report which should receive the careful attention of every one interested in the improvement of these schools, in which one-half of the teachers of the United States are engaged. The following quotation from this report shows that the evil effects of trying to grade the rural schools have been recognized by the members of this important committee, and received special attention from the sub-committee, which arrived at a definite conclusion on this important subject.

"Your sub-committee would call special attention at this point to the evil results that come from the attempt to remedy the defects of the rural school by forcing on it the system of classification found in cities. It is assumed that some of the benefits of the close grading possible in cities will

be gained for the rural schools if they can roughly group the whole school into three or four classes. A rural school of thirty pupils, comprising children from six to sixteen years of age, and covering different degrees of progress from beginners up to those of eight or nine years of schooling, are grouped, let us suppose, into four classes or grades—thus leaving intervals of two or more years of school work between a given group and the next one above it.

“Your sub-committee has already pointed out the evils of classifying pupils in such a way as to bring together pupils differing in degree of advancement by intervals of two years. In fact, it has been found in city schools that one year’s interval between classes is too much. The greatest danger of the graded school system in cities comes from holding back bright pupils for the sake of the slower and duller pupils. Next to this is the evil to the dull ones, who are dragged forward at an unnatural rate of progress to keep up to the average rate of the class. The best pupils are engaged in ‘marking time,’ while the slowest are constantly spurred forward by teachers and parents to keep with their class, and their school years rendered miserable. Their self-respect is undermined by a false standard, that of mere speed in learning. The ‘marking time’ injures the bright pupil by developing lax

habits of study, while the forced marches of the slow pupil tend to destroy his poise of character. It has been found desirable, therefore, in city schools to make the intervals between classes as small as possible, so as to favor frequent transfers, namely, on the one hand of bright pupils who are becoming capable of a greater amount of work into a higher class, and, if necessary, of those who are falling behind the average of the class into the next one below. Intervals of a half year are, therefore, adopted in a majority of the progressive city school systems, and many prefer intervals of a quarter of a year where it is practicable to make them, that is, where a large number of pupils makes possible the assignment of a requisite quota for each class. \* \* \*

“For these reasons classification as above described ought not to be expected in the rural school; it must remain ungraded, and as a result the teacher must resort to individual instruction whenever there are intervals of a year or more in degrees of advancement between pupils; and this is the actual practice in perhaps the majority of such schools. The older pupils, at least, should have separate grammar, history and arithmetic lessons. \* \* \*

“The charge has been made that such rural

schools as adopt a partial grading system are apt to become stiflers of talent, by placing a premium on the average scholars and holding back the promising youth of the district."

#### A PLAN FOR THE RURAL SCHOOL.

The attempt to grade the rural school was for the purpose of reducing the number of classes, that the overburdened teacher might be relieved and enabled to give more attention to each group of pupils. As before pointed out, this desirable end may be reached by the consolidation of classes in all subjects, but only at great loss to the pupils in other ways. What, then, can be done to help the teacher of the so-called ungraded school? Until those at the head see the importance of raising salaries, consolidating schools, and complying with other most excellent suggestions given by the Committee of Twelve, the teacher by the wayside will have to seek for relief in other directions. Can the teacher of the many-graded school so arrange the work as to lessen the number of recitations without grouping pupils with those markedly unequal in ability and in attainments? This is the question which one-half the teachers of the United States are asking themselves and others. It would be folly to attempt to answer this question within the scope of a chapter or two. However, in the hope

that it may be helpful to some of the many teachers interested in this matter, a brief explanation is given of a plan which the writer used and found very helpful while teaching a rural school some years ago. Without doubt, many others have used similar plans and have found them very valuable.

In the school referred to there was an attendance of from twenty to fifty pupils of all ages and grades. So far as possible, classes were formed of those pupils able to do about the same grade of work. Special care was taken to grade closely in reading in the lowest three classes. In these classes this branch was made the primary basis of classification; while in the higher grades arithmetic was made the basis. In language, geography, spelling, history and writing, the pupils were not so closely classified, as in these subjects the pupils can be grouped without injury.

In spite of this grouping, there were more classes than one teacher could attend to properly. More groups could not be made without placing pupils of greatly different attainments in the same class. For this reason, several of the older pupils were appointed assistants. As there is scarcely a school where there are not two or three pupils who are able to assist, and will feel greatly honored to be permitted to work under the direction of the teacher, nearly all teachers can avail themselves

of this device. The pupil whose penmanship was the best was selected to place the written work on the blackboard for the several classes. The same pupil assisted the younger pupils in their attempts to learn to write. Another assistant's special work was to help the lowest three classes in the preparation of their reading, and to hear some of the recitations in the same branch. Those in these classes recited twice each day: generally once to the teacher and once to the assistant. A third assistant was appointed to dictate spelling and other work while the teacher was giving assistance where needed. This assistant also tested classes in studies which were purely memory tests, and looked after that part of the work which was mechanical. All the assistants gave help in the marking of many of the test papers. The heating, lighting and ventilating was attended to by other pupils, who also gave assistance in some parts of the mechanical work.

The work was so mapped out that two of the assistants were busy most of the time, either in hearing recitations; in helping backward pupils over some difficult place in grammar, arithmetic, or geography; or in giving assistance in some one of the ways mentioned above.

In reading, it was not found necessary to have more than two or three classes above the primary.

In arithmetic, there were generally two classes



above the primary. The more advanced pupils worked as individuals, and, when necessary, received help from the teacher. For this purpose one period each day was reserved. In very many cases, the pupils were able to solve the difficulties before the time appointed for receiving help from the teacher. This was better for the teacher and by far the best for the pupil, who thus learned to depend on himself.

In primary classes, the work in language was given in connection with the reading. Above the primary there were two classes in language and one in grammar. In some cases these classes recited on alternate days.

In history and geography the pupils were combined into two or three classes, and the following year continued from where they had stopped in those branches, so that there was no part omitted.

By making use of some such plan as that just described, the efficient teacher of the rural school will be enabled to secure results which will compare very favorably with the best results secured in town and city schools.



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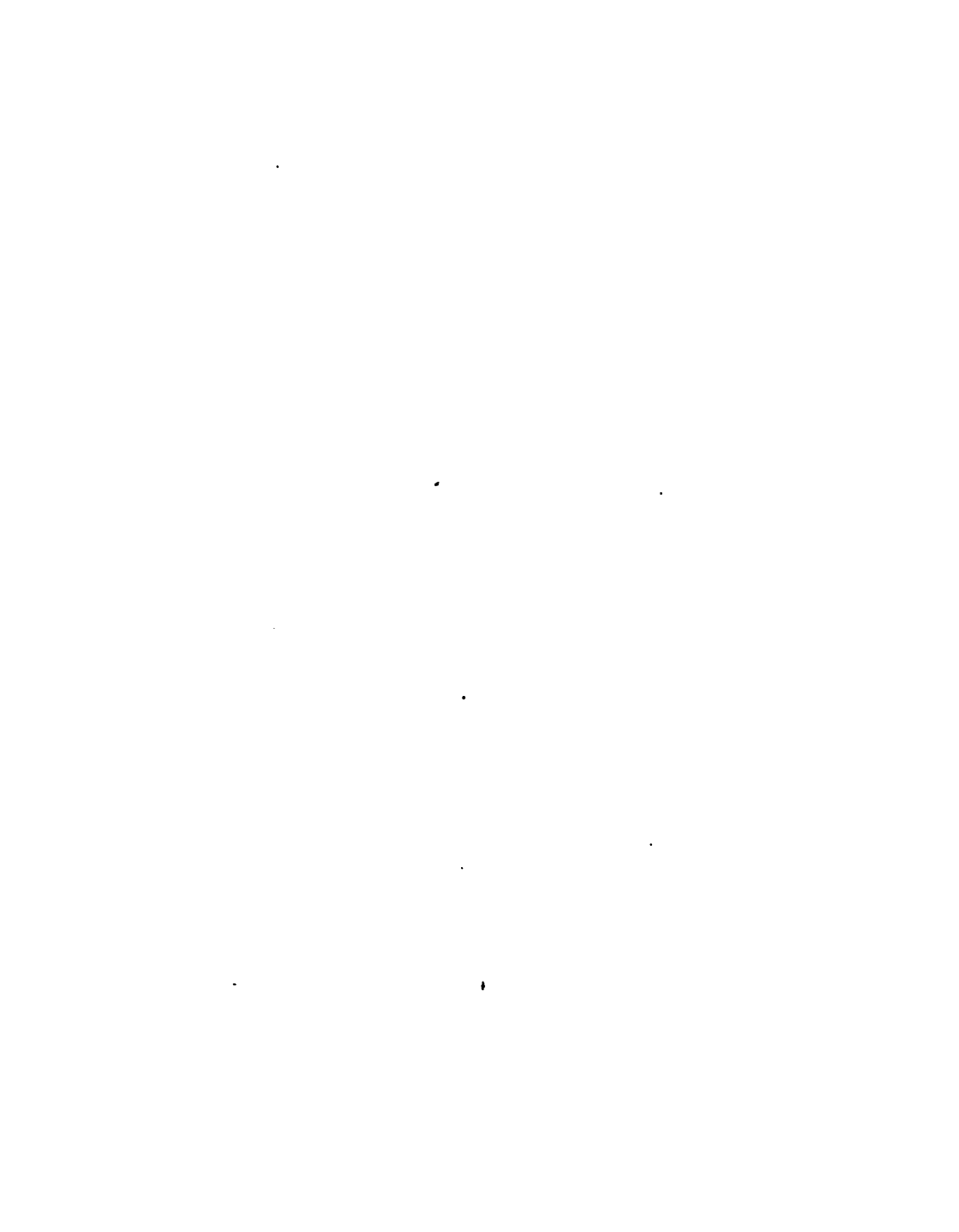
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